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# Reading Female Learning in the mid-Victorian Novel

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# Reading Female Learning in the mid-Victorian Novel

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# Reading Female Learning in the mid-Victorian Novel

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"Reading Female Learning in the mid-Victorian Novel" considers depictions of learning girls and learned women in English novels between 1848 and 1870 as dramatizing the varied relationships between femininity and learning during an era of great educational change. In analyzing novels by Charlotte Yonge, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Lewis Carroll in the context of their cultural-historical conditions, this project examines the significance of education to understandings and performances of Victorian femininity. Its readings identify a pervasive vision of middle-class femininity as incompatible with scholarly learning or educational ambition. "Reading Female Learning" surveys shifting contemporary perceptions and practices of education for girls and women, demonstrating that female education remained a central concern over the course of the nineteenth century in England. Close readings track how novels portray how education affects the female learner as well as how novels construct, consider, and resolve (or not) the perceived incompatibility between femininity and learning. This dissertation reads narratives of girls' progress to womanhood in novels by Yonge and Dickens as modeling the effects of learning on individual women and broader concepts of womanhood. It investigates how Brontë's *Villette* and Carroll's *Alice* books represent the impact of education and ambition for learning on the female body. It examines how Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* represents the influence of learning on individual female identity in relation to society. As a whole, the project explores the relationships between individual women and society, paying particular attention to how novels implicitly or explicitly position the learning female character as a example for women inside and outside the text. Looking beyond the governess and the "New Woman" to the diverse concepts and experiences of female education in mid-Victorian England, "Reading Female Learning" presents the learning or learned woman as a valuable lens through which to investigate education's potentials for and effects on individual and gender development.

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# Introduction: Reading Female Learning

"[W]omen ought not to pursue the same studies as men; . . . they would become exceedingly unwomanly if they did. A woman so educated would, we are assured, make a very poor wife and mother. Much learning would make her mad, and would wholly unfit her for those quiet domestic offices for which Providence intended her. She would lose the gentleness, the grace, and the sweet vivacity, which are now her chief adornment, and would become cold, calculating, masculine, fast, strong-minded, and, in a word, generally unpleasing." (Davies "The Influence of University Degrees on the Education of Women" 5)

Emily Davies's 1863 rehearsal of this contemporary "instinct" against women's higher education underscores the ideological freight of the female learning customary at the middle of the Victorian period (5). In doing so, this quotation also establishes the central inquiry of my project: how education interacts with individual and social expectations and performances of femininity. "Reading Female Learning" applies considerations of learning's effects on the female mind and body to literature, examining the ways in which novelistic representations of female learning participate in or push back against the "instincts" that define individual female identities and cultural concepts of womanhood. Learning has significant ideological valences in Victorian culture, as does womanhood, and though the positions and meanings of both shifted over the course of the century, education consistently serves as a site for female inculcation in or resistance to specific identities and roles.

Through readings of canonical and popular novels published during the mid-Victorian period, roughly 1848 to 1870, I identify learning female characters as sites on which the novel can dramatize identity and gender formation as well as the individual's negotiation of social communities and cultural perceptions. Moreover, my readings investigate the didactic potential of the novel, that is, the learning or learned female character's capacity to function as a model for women inside and outside the text. She may embody ideal femininity and thus serve as an exemplar, or she may illustrate negative effects of intellectuality and thus serve as a warning. In either case, she participates in the novel's instruction of the reader even as she is being educated within it.

Before continuing further, a few distinctions are necessary. First, this project studies the clever girl or educated woman as a figure distinct from the governess and the "New Woman," who have together garnered the majority of attention in literary-critical considerations of Victorian female education.[1] Concentrating on female learning, a category that encompasses young girls and adult women, school instruction and self-education, and the wide range of experiences in between allows me to better capture the multiplicity of education's lived practices and literary representations. Second, as Charlotte Yonge's, Charles Dickens's, Charlotte Brontë's, George Eliot's, and Lewis Carroll's learning or learned female characters originate in middle- or upper-middle-class

[1] A status symbol as well as a symbol of status-flux, the governess has been particularly important to critical assessments of middle- and upper-class women's work and learning. For an example of general studies of the governess, see Broughton and Symes's *The Governess: An Anthology* (1997). The "New Woman" of the 1890s represents the first generation to grow up with access to formal institutions of secondary and higher education for women. She has been studied, particularly in relation to development of the feminist movement, by scholars such as Ledger, Ardis, and Heilmann.

families and undertake their educations in England, I limit the project's focus to middle- and upper-class constructions and experiences of education and femininity.[2]

Third, the project confines itself to the novel--not because it was the only genre to represent female education in the mid-Victorian era, but because of its generic connection to narratives of identity formation.[3] The English novel's heritage of protagonist-driven narratives and the influence of the German *Bildungsroman* (literally, "novel of formation") make it a particularly apt venue for analyzing the effects of education on the individual's understanding and performance of gender. Furthermore, in its capacity to represent and to engage with its social *milieu*, the novel is eminently suited to my efforts to explicate the learning female character's relationship to contemporary perceptions and practices of education and of womanhood.

In order to analyze novels' representations of female learning I employ two main literary-critical methodologies: close reading and historicism. Formal close reading of rhetorical, structural, and verbal devices in the novels enables me to pay rigorous attention to how women are defined, marked, and presented in their novels, how novels

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[2] Yonge's Ethel May is the daughter of a doctor, and her Rachel Curtis is the daughter of a country squire. Though Dickens's Esther Summerson is an orphan, she is firmly ensconced in the middle-class domesticity of Jarndyce's Bleak House, and Louisa Gradgrind's father is a respected schoolmaster. Lucy Snowe's first occupation as companion suggests her family's middle-class status, as does her relationship to the Brettons in *Villette*. Eliot's Maggie Tulliver is the daughter of a land-owning miller and farmer, while Alice's nurse and the detailed descriptions of her home indicate her family as comfortably upper-middle-class. Lucy Snowe and, arguably, Alice, continue their educations beyond England's shores, but both assert their Englishness during their foreign sojourns.

[3] Perhaps the most referenced literary representation of female education during the period was a poem: Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847). It generated many essays on education and was used to justify schemes for separate women's universities. It gave England the phrase "sweet girl graduates" (Prologue.142) and the motto of the Girls' Public Day School Company, "knowledge is now no more a fountain sealed" (II.76). Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) also narrates a woman's education in verse.

conditions readers to react to female learning, and the ways in which literature registers, challenges, and redefines features of its wider contexts. Historicism, particularly feminist historicism,[4] shapes this project's investigations of how literary texts interact with individuals and cultures. Equally, the critical attention of feminist critics such as Nancy Armstrong, Mary Poovey, and Susan Fraiman to how the female subject is culturally and textually constructed has been crucial to my understanding of femininity and identity.

## FEMININITY OR INTELLECTUALITY

To return to the quotation with which this introduction opened, Davies's recitation of the perceived outcomes of higher education for women reinforces a critical commonplace: that womanhood in Victorian England was defined as much by what it was not to be as by what it was. This project's study of learning female characters foregrounds and analyzes the negative definition to which Davies gestures--the incompatibility between femininity and intellectual cultivation and intellectual ambition, which I term "intellectuality." As with all cultural discourses, the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality contains multiple components which shift in prominence and emphasis over the course of the mid-Victorian decades.[5]

Two strains of this incompatibility dominated Victorian considerations of female education and co-existed through the end of the century, which I designate social and biological. The social strain defines femininity as incompatible with intellectuality based

[4] Caroline Walker Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (1988) exemplifies this project's understanding of feminist historicism's practices and inquiries.

[5] In its suggestion of a binary of feminine/learned, this incompatibility also adds to the binaries at the heart of Victorian femininity, such as child/mother and angel/whore.

on an understanding of education as training for an individual's adult roles, in which the liberal education that prepares a young man for university study and a career cannot prepare a young woman for the concerns of home and family. It also involves perceptions of education as potentially able to distract woman from her conventional roles or to inculcate competitiveness and other masculine ways of thinking. The biological strain defines femininity as incompatible with intellectuality based on theories of human development and physiology that posit the female body and mind as subordinate to its reproductive functions, thus making woman unsuited for or incapable of sustained mental work. In this view, intellectual ambition and advanced education can lead not only to physical debility but also to the derangement of mind and gender.

As these brief outlines make clear, both strains depend on ideas of gender difference. The social strain stresses men's and women's distinct roles in the family and in society, and the biological strain stresses physiological distinctions (often as female inferiority) between the sexes. Both strains also perceive the female reproductive capacity as defining womanhood. The social strain emphasizes woman's moral influence on her children, while the biological strain emphasizes her reproductive organs as the seat of her health and the production of healthy offspring as her biological (as well as social) function.

The incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality is essential to my examinations of female learning in the mid-Victorian novel. The first chapter's survey of changes in and rhetorical positions on education for girls and women in nineteenth-century England repeatedly confronts this incompatibility, suggesting its pervasiveness in

contemporary practices and perceptions. The remaining chapters track how different novels confront, resolve, or work around the incompatibility and, in doing so, explicate its various other valences. While not the sole focus of my readings of female learning, the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality registers the project's concern with gender difference and gender formation, especially as it relates to education. For example, the incompatibility's basis in difference between male and female types and capacities for learning maps onto the customary structuring of boys' and girls' learning as shared at the earliest stages and increasingly divergent as they mature.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

Education often served as an early, key marker of gender difference for Victorian children, as boys' and girls' initially shared and then progressively different education suggests. During much of the nineteenth century, female learning generally connoted sister-sister relationships because of the widespread practice, especially among middle-class families, of educating one daughter at school who would, upon her return home, teach her sisters. However, many girls shared lessons or instructors with their brothers as well, and, with the rise of girls' secondary schools in the 1860s, female education increasingly justified itself as giving girls the educational advantages open to their brothers. As women's education advanced, so did the literal and figurative weight of the brother-sister relationship to educational culture.

In the context of the mid-Victorian novel's representations of the learning woman, her relationship to a brother (or brother-figure) primarily functions to justify her access to liberal, conventionally masculine subjects or methods of study. For example, Yonge's

Ethel May, who reads Greek and composes Latin verses, learns from one brother's old textbooks and completes another's grammar school assignments. Similarly, Eliot's Maggie Tulliver and Carroll's Alice are eager to supplement their own learning by looking into their brothers' Latin grammars. Dickens's Louisa Gradgrind shares completely her brother's education in "facts" while Brontë's Lucy Snowe's French compositions are corrected by M. Paul, who styles himself as her brother. On a basic level, the learning girl or woman is associated with a brother as a means of giving her realistic access to learning beyond her own lessons.

The brother or brother-figure gives the sister not only plausible access to liberal, higher subjects but also a plausible reason for her interest in them. For example, a sister may join in her brother's intellectual pursuits as a means of extending her companionship with him, as do Ethel May and Maggie Tulliver. A sister may also study so as to help her brother. Examples abound, both in literature and autobiography, of girls who take to book learning to aid their brother's progress, such as Dickens's Florence Dombey, who learns Paul's lessons so that she may help him survive at Blimber's Academy. A sister's presence might also goad a brother to work harder, as was the case with novelist Mary Martha Sherwood, who recalled that her brother "made such small progress in his Latin, that it was at last suggested that I should be made to learn Latin with him" (qtd. in Sanders 20). Whether his tutor or rival, a sister could help her brother succeed in the schoolroom.

Additionally, sharing a brother's interests might enable a sister to become his confidante and moral guide. Yonge's advice that "a sister can do much to keep her

brother within bounds if she has his thorough love and trust, and can sympathize with him heartily" positions learning as a means by which girls can gain and exercise moral influence over their male siblings (*Womankind* 18.138). It also echoes Ruskin's edict that a woman should learn "whatever her husband is likely to know" to "enable her to sympathize in her husband's pleasures" in its implication that a primary utility of woman's learning is to strengthen her ties to the men to whom she is related (105). Whether characterized by competition, emulation, sympathy, or some combination of the three, a sister's relationship to her brother often gives her motivation for, along with access to, education beyond her own lessons. The novels I consider in this project deploy the brother-sister relationship to varying degrees, from the merest mention of a brother as the means of justifying Alice's (confused) idea of Latin in *Wonderland* to Ethel May's working at Latin compositions side-by-side with her brother Norman. Yet all characterize their learning female characters as sisters of brothers (or surrogate brothers), signaling the importance of this relationship to education's influence on the formation of gender identity.

The brother-sister sibling relationship enables women to enter into traditionally male realms of learning, but it also crucially reinforces education's demarcations of "male" and "female." A number of critics have identified the breakup of the nursery (boys sent to school and girls to lessons in the schoolroom) as an early and thus pivotal moment of gender differentiation.[6] Valerie Sanders places education at the heart of the

[6] For example, Ruwe, discussing the Lambs' verses for children, calls attention to their use of educational themes as a means by which to "describe childhood rites of passage in which the unity of the nursery is broken by the gender differentiations of culture" (97). Davidoff emphasizes that "siblings, in many cases,

brother-sister relationship precisely because it initiates apprehension of gender difference, claiming that "any study of the Victorian brother-sister relationship has to focus on the schoolroom, the place where the differences between them first became manifest" (17). Similarly, in their analysis of brother-sister pairs in *Dombey and Son*(1848), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), and *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Joseph Boone and Deborah Nord argue that education serves as "not only the arena of sexual discrimination . . . but [also] . . . the enforcer of sexual difference itself" (169). By maintaining different standards and content for male and female students, as well as by physically separating them, education enforces--if not enhances--gender differentiation. A girl with a brother thus receives an early lesson in gender difference through the disparity between her schooling and her brother's.

My readings of the brother-sister relationship concentrate on its ability to intensify education's impact on gendered identity formation, but they also consider another aspect of the brother-sister relationship: its ability to model, mirror, or challenge other (familial and non-familial) relationships between the sexes. As Sanders, Boone, and Nord, among others, have suggested, the brother-sister bond can represent a male-female relationship uncomplicated by sexual desire. Therefore, it can serve as a space for the consideration, reassessment, or non-sexual perpetuation of sexual or filial bonds. "Reading Female Learning" examines the multiple valences of the brother-sister relationship as a productive lens for exploring how girls and women learn to be female.

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spend so much of their infancy and childhood together, the life-period when gender identities are being formed," that they are particularly sensitive to the gendered implications of separated schooling (413).

## CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS

My investigation of learning girls and learned women centers on the mid-Victorian novel's varied depictions of what female characters learn, how they learn, how they apply their learning, and how it affects their physical and mental development as female. The novels I study depict education as an essential part of a female character's action in the text or as crucial to her concept of herself and her social place. A primary criterion for the selection of texts was the novel's depiction of learning as an ongoing process or its dedication of narrative space to the effects of learning on a character's understanding of herself as well as of her relationships to family and community. The inclusion of male- and female-authored novels, as well as the mixture of canonical novels with popular (but now often overlooked) ones, such as those by Yonge, allows for a broader, more nuanced depiction of how learning and femininity were depicted and deployed across the period.

Each chapter, indeed each novel, registers different features of the experience and meaning of female learning as well as of the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality. After an opening chapter which outlines major milestones, discourses, praxes, and institutions of female education in the nineteenth century, the second chapter establishes the incompatibility between intellectuality and conventional femininity through readings of scholarly girls who grow up to be conventionally feminine women. The third chapter examines the extension of this incompatibility into a view of education as possessing the potential either to shape domestic womanhood or to pervert natural feminine instincts for family and home. The following three chapters focus more

specifically on the influences of learning on the individual woman: the effects of instruction and discipline on the female body as it relates to the mind, how education impacts a woman's negotiation of social conventions and cultural restraints, and anxiety about the effects of education on female bodies and social roles. Together, the chapters offer a picture of how narratives of female education's practices and results delineate wider cultural concerns with women's changing roles in the home, school, and nation in the mid-Victorian decades.

Chapter one, "Renaissance and Revolution: Female Education in Nineteenth-Century England," introduces and examines the myriad, shifting possibilities and practices of women's education across the nineteenth century in England. Public education was an essential but also fraught subject for the Victorians, who witnessed many changes in educational opportunities and institutions. This chapter outlines those changes, as well as major political, scientific, and cultural engagements with education for girls and women. In order to bring forward these discourses, I examine cultural discussions of women's education alongside institutional documents such as the Taunton Commission's report. Mindful of the changes effected but also of continuities, this chapter's analysis of education for girls and women in nineteenth-century England explores how these events employed or engendered particular rhetorics about education, woman, and Victorian society.

Chapter two, "'As good for household matters as for books': Learning Femininity in Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman of the Family*," argues that Yonge's novels dramatize the incompatibility between intellectuality and womanhood through the

progress of their heroines from intellectually ambitious girls to feminine women devoted to home duties. The novels define womanhood by associating it with self-sacrifice, deference to parental and pastoral authority, and, above all, service to the family. Both novels portray their heroines as intelligent and hard-working enough to learn anything but present the studies they pursue (classical languages and progressive political economy) as unprofitable because they do not aid woman's primary duties to home and family. Moreover, the novels characterize scholarly pursuits as unduly absorbing the effort and interest that the clever girl or woman should instead spend learning and applying feminine knowledge, skills and service. Thus, the heroine's progress away from learning toward home service suggests that education opposes or forestalls feminine womanhood because it diverts a woman's attention and time from useful service to others. *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and *The Clever Woman* (1865) teach readers that a girl or woman must turn away from absorbing education to fulfill her womanly role as helpmeet to mankind.

Chapter three, "Home Learning: Education and Models of Femininity in Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*," reads the novels as two considerations of female education's effects that come to radically different conclusions. The main female characters in *Bleak House* (1853) and *Hard Times* (1854) dramatize education's ability either to reinforce or to threaten the traditional identities of womanhood, in effect splitting the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality into two separate visions of female learning. Esther Summerson is trained as a governess but spends the majority of *Bleak House* in a self-education in conventional domestic virtue. Esther's association of educational work with her role as housekeeper through continual self-scolding suggests

that education for women can create or reinforce a female identity tied to home and family that is continually self-policing. In contrast, Louisa Gradgrind's factual, reasonable education in *Hard Times* dangerously unfits her for conventional womanhood. Through her inability to matriculate into "natural" social roles, the educated female in *Hard Times* disrupts the naturalness of these roles and foregrounds anxieties about the mutability of womanhood. Read together, Dickens's learning women, Esther and Louisa, reveal the novels' vision of education as an ambiguous force, able to both foster and undermine particular modes of femininity.

Chapter four, "'Quieter on the surface': Schooling the Female Mind and Body in Brontë's *Villette*," introduces the project's turn to the effects of learning on individual women's experiences of femininity by charting Lucy's mental discipline, the determined way in which she advances her own knowledge, her pedagogical expertise, and her negotiation of the city of Villette as well as her fierce efforts to restrain or deny particular emotions, fantasies, and desires. This chapter is concerned with the way in which such discipline and control produce and preserve the learned woman. By examining education's impact on Lucy Snowe's body as well as her mind, my readings reveal an understanding of the female body as a legible index of the individual's interiority. *Villette*'s (1853) presentations of Lucy's formal schooling and personal discipline suggest that a woman's identity--as an individual and as female--is always subject to attempts to master and determine it through the cultural forces of instruction.

Chapter five, "Learning Self and Society: Negotiating Education's Double-Bind in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*," scrutinizes how intellect can serve as a foundational

element of a woman's identity but also place her at odds with the society in which she lives. *The Mill on the Floss*'s (1860) Maggie Tulliver's quick intellect initially enables her to define her familial role as her father's pet in the face of a mother and brother who domineer over and disparage her. Though her maturation, changes in family fortune, and her education at home and at school gradually undermine her early intellectual ambitions, Maggie's understanding of her intellect and learning as her great assets shapes her development, generating an intractable double-bind. Divided between impulses toward and away from conventional femininity, Maggie becomes trapped between internal and external conflicts that are finally reconciled only by self-denial and bodily violence.

Chapter six, "Alice's Instruction in *Wonderland* and the Threat of Female Educational Ambition," positions Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) as concerned with the nature and effects of education for girls. Both books present female education as training for conventional, domestic womanhood by framing Alice's journeys with visions of her future motherhood. Moreover, the myriad voices that deprecate Alice's education and intellectual ambition, the oblique but often ominous references to education made by *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* creatures, Alice's frequent confusion about her own identity, and her repeated bodily changes reveal acute anxiety about the effects of study on the female mind and body. The wake of confusion that follows Alice throughout both journeys signals the novels' attendant anxiety about the effects of the intellectually ambitious woman on the society she helps to structure. The repeated threats to the coherence of Alice's body and mind present the dangers that intellectual ambition or

precocity pose to the female mind and body by calling up the unsexed intellectual woman, a creature who forms a stark contrast to the maternal ideal envisioned in the books' narrative frames.

To conclude, I turn to the opening chapters, which offer a more specific introduction to this project's primary fields of inquiry. Chapter one, in its survey of the practices, theories, institutions, and anxieties about female education as they shifted over the course of the nineteenth century, introduces essential concepts and contentions that recur in the novels' depictions of mid-Victorian education. Though necessarily selective and partial, this historical and rhetorical overview grounds and contextualizes each subsequent chapter's readings of learning in particular novels. Chapter two opens the project's exploration of how novels engage with the history and rhetoric surveyed in chapter one. Its readings of two novels by the immensely popular, avowedly didactic Charlotte Yonge articulate the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality, the instructional capacity of the novel, and the educative power of the female learner herself. Together, these two initial chapters establish the concerns at the heart of the project's readings and conclusions.

## Chapter 1: Renaissance and Revolution: Female Education in Nineteenth-Century England

This first chapter contextualizes the project's readings of learning and learned female characters in the mid-Victorian novel by presenting milestones, perceptions, practices, and institutions of female education in the nineteenth century. As the educated girls and women of Yonge, Dickens, Brontë, Eliot, and Carroll all originate in middle- or upper-middle-class families and undertake their educations in England, the following survey focuses almost exclusively on the education of middle- to upper-class girls in England.[7] It endeavors to chart contemporary practices of female learning as well as significant conceptions of goals, performance, and effects across the century.

Educational practices and reforms do not exist in a discursive vacuum. Therefore, this chapter also foregrounds discourses about learning and gender that accompanied, motivated, or challenged institutional and practical change. Not merely a recitation of names, dates of Parliamentary Acts or school foundings, and lists of curricula (which would, in fact, look very much like the lessons set to a girl student at mid-century), it concentrates on how events and practices employed or engendered particular rhetorics of education and womanhood in an attempt to illuminate shared--and contested--perceptions of education's goals and effects on female learners.

[7] Scotland and, to a lesser extent, Wales and Ireland have distinct educational histories and will not enter into this project's consideration of Victorian England. Additionally, because nineteenth-century educational reforms organized types of schooling primarily by socio-economic class, the working classes also have a distinct educational history. This chapter will refer to the educational history of the working classes primarily to contextualize reforms or theories that applied across class boundaries.

## EDUCATION 1800 TO 1848

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century histories of English women's education are fond of claiming that before 1848 the last significant change to schooling for the female sex occurred in the 1530s. Henry VIII dissolved monasteries, convent schools closed and, so the argument runs, girls and women lost access to systematic, scholarly education.[8] Yet these accounts tend to elide the advances of education for girls in the three centuries between the dissolution of the convents and the "renaissance of girls' education." In particular, the increased attention to education in the years between 1800 and 1848 paved the way for the considerations and innovations that would shape schooling for girls and women for the remainder of the century. For example, the liberalist vision of education as a means of creating a more reasonable and representative society drove early educational developments, such as the creation of the Privy Council of Education in 1839. However, this liberal spirit made little headway, in terms of both real educational opportunity for the working classes and its influence on middle- and upper-class perceptions and practices of education.

For middle- and upper-class children, the methods and goals of instruction remained fairly stable in the early decades of the century. For boys, the curriculum they encountered remained primarily a product of socio-economic class. Boys of the middle classes customarily attended local grammar schools or proprietary boarding schools, while boys of the upper classes made up the majority of public school students. Grammar schools, true to their name, continued to center on the elementary subjects, mathematics,

[8] See, for example, Bremner, *Education of Girls and Women in Great Britain* (1897) and Zimmern, *The Renaissance of Girls' Education* (1898).

and ancient languages.[9] The public schools' curricula looked much the same, with perhaps more emphasis on classical subjects as preparation for university study. Though some proprietary schools catering to the middle and lower-middle classes instituted a "commercial" course in which a boy might learn more advanced mathematics and modern instead of ancient languages, most boys' educations reflected the perceived social prestige of this traditional curriculum, and did so for the majority of the century. University education also began a process of gradual modernization in this period. Cambridge and Oxford added professorships and reformed degree examinations. More importantly, the founding of the University College, London, in 1826 opened the possibility of university education to non-Anglican students and to those who wished to study more modern subjects. Though University College and King's College (established in 1832), both of which came under the umbrella of the University of London when the latter was incorporated as an examining and degree-granting body in 1839, did not for several decades reach curricular parity with Oxford or Cambridge, they represent a concern with the accessibility and curriculum of university study that would remain relevant through the Victorian period--and one that women would come to adopt.

Middle- and upper-class girls also continued in older educational patterns. The majority of girls received the bulk--if not all--of their instruction at home. Girls, principally those of wealthier families, commonly supplemented years of home education with "finishing" at a boarding school. This emphasis in formal schooling on "finishing"

[9] In fact, the Eldon Judgment of 1805 rejected the grammar schools' proposed use of endowment money to teach modern languages to non-paying students. This judgment carried the weight of law until reversed by the 1840 Grammar Schools Act.

young ladies for their adult social roles (and their upcoming entrance to the marriage market) led to a curriculum centered on what were universally termed "accomplishments." Early-nineteenth-century school prospectuses identify vocal and instrumental music, dancing, fancy needlework, and French as the primary accomplishments. However, all subjects became accomplishments when taught superficially and with an eye toward producing an effect on others instead of for the benefit of the student. Hannah More's complaints against "that injudicious practice. . . of endeavouring to create talents that do not exist in nature" as a system that "weakens the general powers of the mind, by drawing off its strength into too great a variety of directions" in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799) articulate this concern, which gathered strength in the early decades of the century (4.78-79).

Frances Power Cobbe's experience of boarding school in the 1830s is worth quoting at length, for it illustrates the emphasis on superficial knowledge and rote learning against which More and others protested. At the "*nec pluribus impar*" (52) of ladies' schools in Brighton in 1836, Cobbe reflects, because "nobody dreamed that anyone of us could in later life be more or less than an 'ornament of society,'"

> [E]verything was taught us in the inverse ratio of its true importance. At the bottom of the scale were Morals and Religion, and at the top were Music and Dancing . . . . next to Music and Dancing and Deportment came Drawing, but that was not a sufficiently *voyant* accomplishment, and no great attention was paid to it . . . . then followed Modern Languages. No Greek or Latin were heard of at the school, but French, Italian, and German were chattered all day long, our tongues being only set at liberty at six o'clock to speak English . . . . we also read in each language every day to the French, Italian, and German ladies, recited lessons to them, and wrote exercises for the respective masters who attended every week . . . . naturally, after (a very long way after) came the study of English. We had a Writing and Arithmetic master . . . one and all of us grievously needed his

> instructions . . . and an ‘English master,’ who taught us to write ‘themes’ . . . . beyond all this, our English studies embraced one long, awful lesson each week . . . in History one week, in Geography the week following. (55-59)

Cobbe characterizes her education as typical for upper-class girls, and the “phrenzy of accomplishments,” as More called it, soon trickled down to the increasingly prosperous middle class, from the “elegantly dressed but slenderly-portioned curate’s daughter to the equally-fashionable daughter of the little tradesman, and of the more opulent but not more judicious farmer” (More 11.54). Girls of the middle classes encountered a less accomplished curriculum in their study at home or during a term at day school, but their education was equally comprised of haphazard information and memorization.

Though Emily Shore represents a particularly scholarly home education for a girl of the period, her course of study illustrates the subjects and schedules common to home instruction for girls. Her journal, kept from 1831 to 1838 and published in 1891, reveals that Shore spent much of her time “making myself mistress of history, chronology and geography” through the use of history textbooks, encyclopedias, “tables of comparative chronology” and maps (221). Frequent references to material she must “get by heart” (31) or “learn by heart” (221) indicate that rote learning was not merely the technique of boarding and board schools but made up much of home instruction as well. Her journal also evinces the contemporary emphasis on accomplishments, for in the midst of her home lessons she travels “to Casterton to learn dancing, and French at Stamford” (74). Her references to “the necessary duties of needlework, household affairs, etc.” almost as part of the instructional round of her days exhibit how home education taught the domestic and social skills central to contemporary concepts of femininity (259).

Shore's education represents much that is typical of middle- and upper-middle-class girls' home education, including the familial nature of instruction. While she is taught by her mother as well as by her father, who made his living as a private tutor, other girls learned from mothers, sisters, aunts, or other family members. Additionally, Shore served as the primary instructor for her younger siblings, whom, she records, "I instruct together . . . in Greek, Grecian history, and arithmetic" (128-29). A home education for its girls appeared best to the Shore family, and it remained the preferred mode of educating girls for middle-class families well into the latter half of the century.

This preference for domestic education (in both the sense of education at home and of education for home) results in part from the English middle class's reaction to the perceived social and moral dangers of the French Revolution and English radicalism. The relationship between the health of the family and the health of the nation supported ideals of what Mitzi Myers has influentially termed "enlightened domesticity" and English women as preceptors of morality. For example, More's popular *Strictures* invokes England's tenuous hold on peace and order to support its declaration that "the profession of ladies to which the bent of their instruction should be turned, is that of daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families" (4.77). Training woman to be a moral exemplar for her family and nation is, according to More, all the more necessary "at this period, when our country can only hope to stand by opposing a bold and noble unanimity to the most tremendous confederation against religion, and order, and governments, which the world ever saw" (1.12).

Nearly forty years later, Sarah Stickney Ellis, in *The Women of England* (1839), takes up this conviction, exhorting her female readers, "a nation's moral wealth is in your keeping" (1.18). Ellis sounds a note strikingly similar to More's when she asserts "that the present state of our national affairs is such as to indicate that the influence of woman in counteracting the growing evils of society is about to be more needed than ever" (2.74-75). *The Women of England* insists that middle-class women shape the moral health and social order of the nation through their influence on fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons. Moreover, *The Women of England* presents women, especially middle-class women, who increasingly come to represent as well as guide English culture,[10] as not only bearing the responsibility for national morality, but also bearing it within themselves, emphasizing "how intimate is the connection which exists between the women of England and the moral character maintained by their country in the scale of nations" (2.52). Like More, Ellis identifies education, specifically, a less ornamental and more domestically-useful home education, as a crucial means by which women will be prepared to safeguard their "moral character" and to transmit it to their families and nation.

In addition to gaining essential domestic, social, and moral training, girls educated at home avoided the moral and physical harm thought to be a common result of school education. For example, Ellis insists that the prevailing methods and subjects of a

[10] More identifies the middle classes as the heart of the nation even as she worries about the "danger of rendering obsolete the heretofore common saying, 'that most worth and virtue are to be found in the middle station'" (2.54). Ellis gives them the same status almost by default. The aristocracy cannot truly represent England "because the higher the rank, and the greater the facilities of communication with other countries, the more prevalent are foreign manners, and modes of thinking and acting common to that class. . . in other countries" (1.20). Thus, for Ellis, the middle classes "must include so vast a portion of the intelligence and moral power of the country at large" that they must be the heart of the nation (1.20-21).

boarding school education amount to a "system . . . of pure selfishness, fed by accumulation and rewarded by applause" (3.87) that completely unfits girls for their "future, when their merit will be to give the place of honour to others and their happiness to give it to those who are more worthy than themselves" (3.88). Emily Shore rejoices at her home education, for "boarding schools are nurseries of illness," recording that "in one school in particular, all who had been there two years were more or less crooked" (38). Concerns with competition, vanity, overwork, under-feeding, and many more varieties of ill-health and ill-manners in girls' schools persisted throughout the century. If women preserve their morality by remaining in the home and transmit it by their example, as these texts suggest, then a home education best molds girls into the wives and mothers the nation needs.

Home education for girls also made economic sense. Customarily, boys and girls shared their earliest lessons, and when their brothers left for school--a considerable expense for most families--sisters continued to be taught at home instead of incurring a similar expense. Moreover, since a girl's education often stressed social training as much as (if not more than) intellectual training, remaining at home enabled her to observe and practice social skills naturally, as a member of the household. Thus, girls educated at home saved the family money while benefitting from the influence and surveillance of their female family members regardless of whether they, a governess, or another family member provided the day-to-day instruction. The claim that employing a governess as "the safest, the healthiest, the pleasantest, the most effectual, and cheapest form of

education" for girls sums up the perceived advantages of home education for daughters of the middle and upper-middle classes (qtd. in Hughes 23).

Instruction by a governess became increasingly common for upper- and upper-middle-class girls and remained so until the end of the century. The rapid rise of governessing as a career during this period results from a confluence of factors, including the growth of a prosperous "new" middle class, who deemed local schooling inadequate for their heightened social status; an emphasis on leisure as a marker of middle- and upper-class femininity, which removed women from the day-to-day instruction of their children; the continued stress on social training in the education for girls and young women, which necessitated a ladylike instructor; and governessing's status as one of the few respectable employments for middle- and upper-class women who needed or desired an occupation. As these factors make clear, the employment of a governess functioned as a status marker, signaling that the family had leisure and resources enough to give its daughters as well as its sons a socially advantageous education. However, the position of governess was often far from socially advantageous for the governess herself. Her perilously incongruous social, economic, and sexual status prompted articles, novels, advice books, and schemes for reform by the 1830s. It also motivated the opening of The Governesses' Benevolent Institution (GBI) in 1843 to encourage prudent saving by governesses and to provide financial support to those in dire need because of unemployment, illness, or other misfortunes (Maurice "Queen's College" 1-2).

In 1847 the GBI began conferring teaching certificates as a part of its effort to increase the governess's professional status. The certification examinations in turn

exposed the need for a system of classes, for, as Zimmern remarks, "to attempt to examine the untaught was a useless inversion of the natural order" (22). Beginning with evening classes, the GBI instituted a series of courses for current or aspiring governesses in 1847. Soon daytime classes were added and "ladies" were admitted. In 1848 the educational arm of the GBI moved into a dedicated building in Harley Street, London and became Queen's College. The institution of "a college in London for the education of females," as founder F.D. Maurice describes it in his introductory lecture on the school's "objects and method," is a watershed event ("Queen's College" 1). For the Victorian public as well as for many nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians, the founding of Queen's College marks the earnest beginning of the reform of women's education in England.

**EDUCATION 1848 TO 1860**

The opening and immediate success of Queen's College evinces the growing concern with education and reform in the mid-Victorian period. Between 1848 and 1860, the methods and effects of education became a topic for political, medical, literary, and public consideration. For example, the growing popular definition of education as training for an individual's future career and mode of life increased calls for middle-class male education in non-classical subjects. Cambridge's and Oxford's additions of schools and degrees in Natural Science, Modern History, and Law in 1848 and 1850, respectively, reflect this influence, even if, in practice, university education remained

much the same.[11] These entrenched traditions of male education, particularly for the upper-middle and upper classes, maintained their power to shape curricula at the public schools and endowed grammar schools.[12] At the same time, proprietary secondary schools (often the engines of innovation and modernization) continued, along with University College, London, and King's College, London, to advance towards a more modern course of schooling,[13] though such courses remained a rarity, not the norm, and were often avoided by segments of the middle and upper classes until the end of the century.

A crucial development in male, middle-class education during this period was the advent of the public examination. The Oxford Local examination, instituted in 1857, began as a matriculation exam based on the curricula and textbooks of local schools as well as on the results of a survey of middle-class parents about "the kind of knowledge required in business" (Roach 69). Cambridge adopted a similar examination system in 1858. Together, the Locals, as they became known, provided a common standard by which middle-class students and schools could measure themselves. Additionally, by including subjects beyond the classics and mathematics, the Locals encouraged more and

[11] Proprietary schools for non-Anglican students as well as University College, London, were often at the forefront of curricular modernization and diversification for male middle- and upper-class secondary and post-secondary schooling (see Ferreira-Buckley).

[12] The curriculum of these schools followed closely those of Oxford and Cambridge because they were viewed as preparatory to university matriculation per the division of education into "grades" assumed by the Newcastle and Clarendon Royal Commissions. This division was codified by the Schools Inquiry (Taunton) Commission's Report in 1867 and the Education Acts of the 1860s and 1870s.

[13] Educational historian W.B. Stevens defines this more modern curriculum as "a spread of traditional subjects plus the natural and social sciences and training for careers in medicine, architecture, the law and engineering" (54).

better instruction in subjects that would prepare the middle-class man for his professional life.

Young women joined their male peers at these Local examinations in 1863, as I discuss in the next section. During the period 1848 to 1860, the schools from which the first female exam candidates would come opened, developing new standards for female secondary and post-secondary education. Leading this new era of girls' secondary schooling was Queen's College, which offered its students a "college system of teaching," which Rosalie Grylls, the first historian of Queen's, defines as "the professors giving lectures and setting essays for correction which again followed the university practice of being graded by classes" (8). The first instructors at Queen's were Maurice's colleagues in the professoriate at King's College, London. The curriculum for Queen's opening term in 1848, including English literature, English language, history and geography, arithmetic, Latin, French, German, Italian, natural philosophy and astronomy, principles and methods of teaching, drawing, harmony and musical composition, and vocal music registers its initial purpose of teaching governesses in its offering of multiple modern languages and music. Though Grylls maintains that "it was largely in the teaching of the same mathematics to girls as to boys that Queen's was most revolutionary," the early absence of higher mathematics (as well as Greek, for example) indicates the continuing disparity between male and female education (20).

This disparity also manifests itself in Maurice's outline of Queen's educational mission, which foregrounds learning's utility within the domestic sphere. He insists that the College's goal is to make female education "more quiet, more unpretending, more in

harmony with the course of an orderly domestic life" (Maurice "Address" 347). He also positions instruction at Queen's as a supplement to "domestic life," avowing that pupils "obtain all that is most precious in their experience and discipline, all their highest wisdom, at home" (Maurice "Queen's College" 6). Maurice's privileging of the home underscores the mission of Queen's to train governesses, while also authorizing the college's extension of instruction to "every lady" (Maurice "Queen's College" 5). "Every lady is and must be a teacher--of some person or other, of children, sisters, the poor," Maurice contends, invoking the mid-century perception of education as a means of producing better wives and mothers (Maurice "Queen's College" 5). Thus, even with its "revolutionary" mission and curriculum, Queen's remained tied to traditional educational patterns and gender ideologies.

Bedford College, founded by Elizabeth Jesser Reid in 1849, sought to meet "the demand for a better and more extended system of female education" that the success of Queen's had confirmed (Tuke 319). However, Bedford differentiated itself from Queen's in significant ways. Most importantly, it provided "a curriculum of liberal education . . . for ladies" without reference to future careers as governesses. Instead, as Margaret Tuke emphasizes in *A History of Bedford College for Women*, its educational mission centered on the belief that "life would be more worthwhile for . . . girls and women if their minds were trained by systematic study and if they had the resources of literature, science, and the humanities to fall back upon" (xiv). Bedford's emphasis on learning for personal culture, not necessarily for future employment, led to another distinction from Queen's: its more advanced curriculum. The college's 1849 prospectus lists the subjects offered as

English Literature, Moral Philosophy, Ancient and Modern History, Mathematics, Natural Science, Astronomy and Scientific Geography, Latin, German, French, Italian, Elocution, Vocal Music, Harmony, and Drawing (qtd. in Tuke 320). These courses were, from the outset, designed to be "given on the same plan as the public universities, of combined lectures, examinations, and exercises," according to an 1852 "Statement" (qtd. in Tuke 21). Bedford's curriculum further expanded with the addition of Greek in 1856 and its increasing emphasis on the sciences beginning in the 1870s. Though quite different, together Queen's College and Bedford College represent the first attempts to formalize higher education for women.

As headmistresses of two pioneering secondary day schools, two early alumnae of Queen's College furthered mid-century progress toward rigorous, liberal schooling for middle- and upper-class girls. Francis Buss, headmistress of the North London Collegiate School, founded in 1850, and Dorothea Beale, headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies College, founded in 1853, developed their schools into model educational institutions over the next half-century. First, North London aimed to educate the middle-class girls of London for whom an education at a boarding school, with a governess, or at Queen's College was financially unattainable. The school's 1850 prospectus opens with the goal of giving middle-class girls the "sound education . . . as necessary for the Daughters as for the Sons of that large and influential portion of Society," namely, the middle classes (qtd. in Scrimgoeur 208). Buss and North London Collegiate defined the middle classes broadly, from the gentleman to the tradesmen: the 1850 prospectus imagines its pupils as the daughters of "professional gentleman of limited means, clerks in public and private

offices, and persons engaged in trade and other pursuits" (qtd. in Scrimgoeur 207). The prospectus's insistence on the necessity of sound education for middle-class girls hinges on a conventional definition of woman's--and education's--duties, "that future mothers of families should be so educated that they may be enabled to diffuse amongst their children the truth and duties of religion, and to impart to them a portion of that massive information placed by modern education within the reach of all" (qtd. in Scrimgoeur 208). Like their brothers, who will gain knowledge and skills that will aid their becoming "professional gentleman . . . clerks . . . and persons engaged in trade," students at North London Collegiate will learn the subjects that will best enable them to become mothers of families and guardians of humanity (qtd. in Scrimgeour 208).

North London Collegiate's curriculum intended to "combine the essential branches of a sound and liberal education," such as "History and Geography, English Language and Literature, Elements of Latin, Writing and Arithmetic, French Language and Literature . . . . the Leading Facts of Natural Philosophy and other Branches of Science," as well as "Plain and Ornamental Needlework," with "such accomplishments as may be required to fit the pupils for their position in society," including drawing, singing, and the school's "extras," subjects taught "at a moderate additional charge": German, Italian, "the Piano-Forte, Solo Singing, Painting in Watercolors, [and] Dancing" (qtd. in Scrimgoeur 208). This "sound and liberal" curriculum indicates a determination to advance education for the female sex while adhering to traditional ideals of feminine character and duties.

Like North London Collegiate, Cheltenham Ladies' College was founded to extend to local girls the same types of educational opportunities that were opening to their brothers. However, unlike North London Collegiate, which catered to a wide spectrum of the middle class as a day school, Cheltenham presented itself as a boarding school, "an institution for the daughters . . . of noblemen and gentlemen" (qtd. in Clarke 26). Also unlike North London Collegiate, which operated as a private school owned and staffed by the Buss family, Cheltenham began as a proprietary enterprise, in which shareholders nominated pupils, voted at annual meetings, and had a voice in the selection of school staff and its management.

Cheltenham's curricular decisions lay in the hands of the school's all-male "Education Committee," which advised the headmistress. For example, the Committee determined what subjects were to be offered, as with its determination to reduce the teaching of piano and other instrumental music in 1855. It also determined how those subjects were taught, as in the Committee's request that "the arithmetical teacher. . . exercise his class in *viva voce* mental arithmetic every third lesson" in 1856 (qtd. in Clarke 37). The Education Committee further oversaw the creation of the school's initial curriculum, which included English Language, Arithmetic, "the Elements of Latin," Drawing, French, Geography, History, Music, Needlework, "Calisthenic Exercises" and individual piano lessons, with German, Italian, and Dancing offered as extras (qtd. in Clarke 27). The Committee also articulated the school's mission in its first report to shareholders in 1855, echoing contemporary perceptions of woman's role in society and the effect of education on female development. Citing the "strong prejudice against the

development of girls' intellectual powers, from the impression that all well-educated women are blue-stockings, and that learning unfits them for their domestic mission" (qtd. in Clarke 34), the Committee presents Cheltenham's offer of "sound instruction without sacrificing accomplishments" as an educational system that would refute, or at least temper, that prejudice (qtd. in Clarke 35). Yet the Committee's celebration of Cheltenham's blended curriculum as able to "develop the intellect without making female pedants" reproduces the prejudice against blue-stockings and positions accomplishments as a safeguard against the girls becoming "unfit . . . for their domestic mission" (qtd. in Clarke 35). Similarly, the committee's feeling that "the general welfare of society at large depends greatly on . . . a due cultivation of women's minds" partakes of the contemporary concern with women's place as reproducer and nurturer of the social body employed by both supporters and skeptics of women's liberal education (qtd. in Clarke 34).

The concept of woman as mother and caretaker to society took on new nuance in this period as medical professionals became increasingly anxious (and vocal) about women's health and social roles. In 1852, Edward Tilt published *Elements of Health and Principles of Female Hygiene*, which combines the fields of hygiene gynecology, and obstetrics with social observation to claim that "the great means of improving the human race must be sought in the improvement of woman" (1).[14] Tilt urges woman's importance to both the race's physical manifestation in individual bodies and its manifestation as a

[14] Tilt was senior physician-accoucheur to two London charity hospitals at the time of *Elements of Health*'s publication. He was elected to the Royal College of Physicians in 1859. He was also one of the first fellows of the Obstetrical Society of London, serving as its president in 1874-1875 (see Power).

social unit, often conflating the two in a single sentence. For example, *Elements of Health* outlines "the part destined to woman" as "not only . . . the matrix in which humanity is cast, but also the *nutrix*, the chief nurturer and supporter of mankind, whether to an infant seeking milk at her breast, or to suffering humanity requiring love's watchful tenderness" (15). This explanation encompasses both the physical sustenance of an individual child and the metaphorical healing of society--"humanity"--as the purview of woman. From this association of the individual physical body with the social body, *Elements of Health* asserts that "the physical health of woman is the best base of her strength of mind and sound morality" (19)[15] and, further, that "the influence of the mother is forcibly shown in that of the children" (13). Thus, on women's health "rests the strength of constitution of future families, of nations, and of mankind" (19). Woman's physical health determines her mental and moral state, Tilt alleges, and she transmits all three to her offspring, who in turn make up the family, the nation, and the race.

Identifying woman's physical health as the foundation of mankind, Tilt prescribes a reformed understanding of female physiology as well as a reform in female education. Privileging the onset of regular menstruation as "the only basis of the right management of the health of women in afterlife," Tilt recommends that "during the crisis of puberty, and until puberty is fully confirmed, there should be a general relaxation from study" (209). He states that study can "too forcibly engross the mind, and the energies required by the constitution to work out Nature's ends" (209) and contends that that current modes

[15] Tilt here anticipates Herbert Spencer's 1860 assertion that "the best brain is found of little service if there be not enough vital energy to work it" (*Education* 2.95).

of education encourage "a great mismanagement of the function peculiar to . . . the reproductive system" (20). Though education has the power to unsettle the female body during puberty, *Elements of Health* also endows it with the power to strengthen the body by delaying puberty's onset. This delay, Tilt assures his readers, will give women "a greater probability of longevity, and . . . a greater amount of health" (179). Moreover, Tilt advocates for "a more solid education of the female mind" (150) so that "those women who do not marry should no longer be left . . . without any resource for the mind to fall back upon, to the great detriment of bodily health" (19). Education, then, can function to either exacerbate or delay the trials of puberty, which Tilt (and many of his fellow medical professionals) pathologizes as dangerous to the female body and mind. This ambiguous power of study on the girl student illustrates the Victorian understanding of the female mind and body as mutually influential, and that mutual influence as potentially harmful (19).

Maria Grey's and Emily Shirreff's *Thoughts on Self-Culture* (1850) similarly advances education as "a resource for the mind to fall back upon" (Tilt 19).[16] However, instead of advocating learning as a resource for unmarried women--and primarily for the sake of their physical health--Grey and Shirreff depict it as a necessity for all women of the middle and upper classes. Like Tilt, they envision woman's influence as operating on both "the individual and the race" (42) and claim that "social and moral reformation . . .

[16] The sisters were influential figures in both the women's rights and women's education movements of the nineteenth century. Together they founded the National Union for the Improvement of the Education of Women of All Classes Above the Elementary in 1871, and, under its aegis, the Girls' Public Day School Company. Grey also worked to open essential resources to female teachers, including the first English teacher-training college for women. Shirreff notably served as head mistress at Hitchin (later Girton College) during the Lent 1870 term (see Levine, "Shirreff" and "Grey").

must begin with domestic life" (26). Yet instead of presenting education as necessary in order primarily to enact this "social and moral reformation" or for women's and the race's bodily health, *Thoughts on Self-Culture* depicts female education as necessary to liberate women from the "vacant and aimless . . . inactive existence" (10-11) that Grey and Shirreff characterize as the lot of most middle- and upper-class women.

*Thoughts on Self-Culture* presents the *ennui* of woman's life as draining and harmful: "All who will dispassionately consider woman's social position . . . its trials and its privations . . . the sufferings from dependence, from confined activity, and from helplessness as regards her own destiny,--must too be aware of the value of such a new spring of mental energy as love of knowledge would create" (383). More importantly, it traces this *ennui* to the accomplishments curriculum and the young age at which women forgo mental culture:

> [E]ven the so-called education, trivial as it is, is far superior to the mode of life that follows. In the former, there is, at least, regular occupation, and some pursuit of knowledge; in the latter, all semblance of study is thrown aside . . . . the girl who at twelve years old would have been punished for reading Miss Edgeworth's stories, instead of Rollin's History, when she is eighteen reads nothing but novels, or at best some gossiping biography . . . no opening is left for them to turn to better things. (14)

"The love of knowledge would be new life to women," Grey and Shirreff claim, by preventing them from "draining the full draught of *ennui* which too often fate presents to them, and will at once give exercise and peace to the mind" (386-87). By casting a love of knowledge, habits of method, critical thinking, and application as essential to women's performance of her essential duties, *Thoughts on Self-Culture* presents "a sound and liberal education" as the ideal means by which a girl "can prepare for positions so

different as that of married or single life" (33). It emphasizes education's ability to prepare a girl for either position in part because it envisions a woman as having little control over which state she will inhabit. Education will "call forth the mental powers, and train them to form a high and decided tone of moral character" (33), which a woman will employ to "educate her sons. . . [and] aid national prosperity by her social influence" (36). *Thoughts on Self-Culture* thus supports its call for female pursuit of "a sound and liberal education" by associating mentality with morality--presenting liberal learning as beneficial not just to the individual woman but to the whole of society (33).

*Thoughts on Self-Culture*'s connection between mental discipline and moral cultivation also lies at the heart of Shirreff's later *Intellectual Education and Its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women* (1858). *Intellectual Education* elaborates on *Thoughts on Self-Culture,* offering a course of study as the best way to "counteract the many dangers of leisure and the narrowing tendencies of small cares and occupations amidst which women must unavoidably live" (19). Indeed, much of the book is spent outlining "*how* the task of self-improvement is to be accomplished" (3). The course of learning set out in *Intellectual Education* encompasses "elementary mathematics and outlines of certain portions of natural philosophy, grammar--studied through the means of one or more foreign languages," as well as history, English literature, and later, political economy and "the principles of mechanics" (50). For all its rigor, Shirreff's plan does not eschew conventionally feminine subjects such as needlework, drawing, and music. Neither does *Intellectual Education* eschew conventional concepts of femininity. Its insistence that study engenders the "habitual cheerfulness" that is essential to women's

health and happiness registers an espousal of conventionally feminine attributes, such as women's "natural predominance of feeling" over reason (76) and their role as "the natural guardians of man's highest interest. . . [who] purify and sustain and resist the lowering tendencies of active life" (17-18).

*Intellectual Education* also reiterates growing anxieties about study's effects on girls' physical health. Though she protests against "being supposed to refer all moral and mental symptoms to the bodily condition" (99), Shirreff maintains that "everything that interferes with bodily health . . . reacts upon the mind, affecting the brain or the temper," and that, reciprocally, "everything that jades or irritates the mind tells injuriously upon health" (108). Therefore, *Intellectual Education* suggests that girls break up their study with meals, physical exercise, and household chores, which have the added benefit of teaching them "homely occupations" and "household skill" (57). It further sets out strict guidelines for how many hours a girl should study each day depending on age and "regulated by the state of health" (215).

Shirreff's vision of the "*well-balanced* mind that is needed to educate and influence others" registers the early-Victorian emphasis on female education as training girls and young women for their "more serious duties as a wife, a mother, or a member of society" (27). Liberal learning, whether at home or at school, was considered beneficial insofar as it prepared the female student for those "serious duties" without damaging her physical or mental ability to carry them out. This concern with education's capacity to fit girls for their adult roles as well as its potential to unfit girls for them, was extended and modified in the following decade.

**EDUCATION 1860 TO 1870**

The decade between 1860 and 1870 saw the highest concentration of developments in female education of the Victorian era, due in part to the influence of the newly instituted women's secondary schools as well as to increasing governmental involvement in education for both sexes at various socioeconomic levels. During this decade, three educational Commissions either convened, investigated, or reported, and some did all three. First, the Newcastle Commission reported on state expenditure for (primarily) working-class education in 1861. Its report led to the 1862 Revised Code for elementary schools, famous for the system of "payment by results." Second, in 1864 the Clarendon Commission (instituted in 1861) reported on the oldest public schools. This report recommended changes to the schools' governance and curricula and formed the basis for the 1868 Public Schools Act, which created new governing bodies responsible for each school, as well as special commissioners to oversee them.

Third, and most significantly for female education, the School's Inquiry or Taunton Commission examined secondary education--the schools, instructors, and curricula that served the segment of the population not covered by the Newcastle and Clarendon Commissions. In its report, issued in 1867 and 1868, the Taunton Commission recommended a three-tiered system of secondary education, with differing lengths of attendance and curricula for the different "grades" of the middle class,[17] increased

[17] These divisions applied primarily to boys' schools. The amount of ancient language instruction serves as a distinguishing feature of the different curricula: the "first grade" of school kept students until 18 or 19 years old. They resembled grammar schools in their emphasis on Latin and Greek in order to prepare upper- and upper middle-class boys for university study. The "second grade" schools kept students until 16 or 17 years old and included more science and modern languages along with Latin in order to prepare middle-class boys for civil service and the professions. The "third-grade" schools kept students until 14 or

scientific instruction for all students, and a redistribution of endowment funds. The Taunton Report shaped the 1868 and 1869 Endowed Schools Acts, which appointed commissioners to make financial changes to existing endowments and to create new endowments, extending secondary education to a larger portion of the middle classes. The legislative and institutional progress briefly surveyed here indicates an acute interest in education's goals, effects, and availability--and the goals, effects, and availability of female education were among the most discussed and impacted.

The decade's numerous effects on female educational began with the trial admission of female students to the Cambridge Local examination in 1863. Emily Davies,[18] as secretary for a committee of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, successfully petitioned the Cambridge Syndicate to allow girls to sit for the exam as an experiment in 1863. Though the female students took the exam simultaneously with male students, they did so in a closed room, no girls were tested in Latin or in mathematics higher than arithmetic, and no individual's name was announced to the public with her results. Of the 91 girls who sat the first examination, including students from both Cheltenham and North London Collegiate, 34 passed. The failures publicly testified to areas in which girls' education lagged behind that of boys, but those who passed demonstrated girls' capacity for secondary, liberal learning while also

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15 and only taught the basics of Latin along with elementary subjects to lower-middle-class boys who would become tradesmen, farmers, and artisans.

[18] A tireless and influential campaigner for women's secondary and higher education, as well as for women's suffrage, Emily Davies founded and oversaw the early years of Girton College, Cambridge. She was involved with numerous groups and committees related to women's education, employment, and rights, including the Langham Place group, the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women and the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (see Delamont).

illuminating the progress of what June Purvis calls "the new academic schools" like North London and Cheltenham (75). The 1863 trial examination became the touchstone example of examination's beneficial effects on female education and established that girls could engage in sustained mental labor without damage to body or mind. After a three-year probationary period, the Cambridge Syndicate permanently opened its Local to girls in 1867. Following their success with the Cambridge Local, Davies, Beale, and Buss, among others, petitioned the Taunton Commission to consider the management, conditions, and curricula of girls' schools in their study of secondary education when it convened in 1864. The inclusion of girls' schools in the Taunton Commission's investigation brought national and governmental attention to middle-class female education. In addition to interviewing students, touring schools, and sending out questionnaires, the commissioners "examined many ladies at the head of girls' schools, a few gentlemen . . . connected with such schools, and collegiate institutions, and several ladies and others who have specifically given their attention to the subject" (Beale *Reports* 3). The Commission's report records prevailing practices and prejudices of female education, but it also recommends avenues for progress.

Overall, the report concludes that "the state of middle-class female education is, on the whole, unfavourable," citing a "want of thoroughness and foundation; want of system; slovenliness and showy superficiality; inattention to rudiments; undue time given to accomplishments, and those not taught intelligently or in any scientific manner; want of organization" as the broad basis for its conclusion (Beale *Reports* 3). Commissioner Norris offers a more detailed summary:

> [W]e find, as a rule, a very small amount of professional skill, and inferior set of schoolbooks, a vast deal of dry uninteresting task work, rules put to memory with no explanation of their principles, no system of examination worthy of the name, a very false estimate of the relative value of the several kinds of acquirement, a reference to the effect rather than to solid worth, a tendency to fill or adorn rather than to strengthen the mind (Beale *Reports* 6)[19]

The report qualifies this condemnation of middle-class female education with its statement that "the same complaints apply to a great extent to boys' education," exhibiting how comparison between the sexes shaped the Commission's perception of female education as well as its recommendations for it (Beale *Reports* 3). However, the comparison results in an assertion of equality, for the Commission recommends that male and female education "be the same up to the point when the professional instruction of boys begins," that both sexes sit the same examinations, and that endowment funds be appropriated for girls' schools (Beale *Reports* 7). These recommendations represent an effort to codify the Commission's finding that "the essential capacity for learning is of the same, or nearly the same in the two sexes" (Beale *Reports* 6). Until the age of professional differentiation (which aligns with the onset of puberty and more marked gender differentiation), the Taunton Commission views boys and girls of the middle classes as intellectually comparable and thus recommends that they be educated comparably. The report's specification that after age twelve girls' education "should be similar, but not carried so high" as boys', and that comparability should end at "the point when the professional instruction of boys begins" suggests a sense on the part of the

[19] The report that "Mr. Fitch says they [mathematics] are not taught *mathematically*" pithily illustrates this view of female education as without method (Beale *Reports* 6). In this complaint, the Taunton commissioners echo earlier complaints against the superficiality of female education, such as those made by Shirreff and Grey in the 1850s and More earlier in the century.

Commission that such claims for comparable education would be challenged by medical, educational, and other professionals who maintained that masculine education threatened female health and her reproductive development (Beale *Reports* 7).

Though it asserts the intellectual equality of the sexes, the Taunton Commission's report is unwilling to recommend co-education, stating that "the complete assimilation of the education of the sexes, such as prevails in America, should not be attempted" (Beale *Reports* 6). Instead, it advocates the continuation of a distinctly female education as appropriate to innate gender difference.[20] For example, the report views "the combination of school teaching with home influence, such as day schools admit of" as best for girls because "the homes of the middle class are commonly favorable to the growth and development of the female character" (Beale *Reports* 11).

Though the Commission and the subsequent 1869 Endowed Schools Act represent a widening acceptance and availability of liberal female education, their reach was by no means universal. In 1869, a large proportion of middle- and upper-class women still received little institutional schooling: the Taunton Commission's report finds that "in the middle class many more girls are wholly kept and educated at home than boys, and of those who do go to school, the school education is brought to a close at the age of 16 or 17 in far more cases, than with the male sex" (Beale *Reports* 18). It additionally notes that "the wealthiest class, as a rule, do not send their daughters to school" (Beale *Reports* 10). This finding underscores the fact that an education at one of

[20] For example, the Commission's report notes "the characteristic mental difference of the sexes" in the report of the Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate for 1867, in which "the best boys wrote with vigor and precision, the best girls with ease and vivacity" (Beale *Reports* 8).

the ladies' colleges or other secondary schools for girls remained a rarity, not the norm. The majority of middle- and upper-class girls continued to learn at home, at a day school or a private, home-like boarding school, and to complete formal schooling in their mid-to late-teens. Thus, while this decade's advances in secondary and higher education represent real and important progress, they also represent a vanguard staked out in part by the burgeoning feminist movement, not the mass experience.

Between 1860 and 1870, the women's colleges and other secondary schools continued to advance female secondary education, in part through their role of preparing girls for outside examinations. In 1866, Durham University opened its Local examination to female students, and the North of England Council for the Higher Education of Women organized its first lecture courses. These courses helped female students prepare for the Durham Local and, in doing so, inaugurated the university extension movement. Schools expanded their curricula, adding higher branches of mathematics, Latin and Greek, sciences, and courses in cookery and hygiene as their populations and popularity grew. By 1868, formal secondary education for women advanced enough to generate demand for an examination for students completing their formal schooling, which Cambridge furnished in the form of its Women's Higher Local examination. This examination, for students over 18 years old, served to "test . . . the capacity and attainment of women who desire to become teachers in families or schools" (qtd. in Roach 120). The examination was comprised of four compulsory subjects, divinity, arithmetic, English history, and English literature and composition, as well as five voluntary groups of subjects: languages, mathematics, logic and political economy,

natural sciences, and art and music. By offering middle-class women a credible certification of knowledge to be used as qualification for a teaching position, Cambridge's Women's Higher Local thus fulfilled the early goal for which Queen's College was founded.

The Cambridge Women's Higher Local precipitated a move forward in female education even as it fulfilled a past goal. As the examination gained esteem, and as girls' secondary schooling continued to advance, larger numbers of candidates pursued a longer course of study in order to pass and to gain a certificate. Roach characterizes this outcome as inevitable: "women's examinations, once they had moved beyond the school level, soon came to demand both teaching and residence if the work was to be carried forward. The movement which began by providing written tests of competence was quickly to broaden out into the foundation of residential colleges for women" (122). Merton Hall, which became Newnham College, Cambridge illustrates this pattern, as it developed out of Henry Sidgwick's organization of lectures for students preparing for the Women's Higher Local.[21]

Though it illustrates how the Women's Higher Local facilitated female access to higher education, Merton does not represent the only path blazed in the 1860s. In fact, Hitchin, later Girton College, Cambridge, began almost in opposition to the Women's Higher Local. The first women's residential college, it was opened by Emily Davies at

[21] The lectures, begun in 1870, drew enough students that Sidgwick eventually set up a house for them, with Anne J. Clough (of the North of England Council for the Higher Education of Women and sister of Arthur Clough) as its head. Called Merton Hall, it was founded in 1880. Oxford opened its Local to girls in 1867 and instituted its Women's examination (on the model of its undergraduate exams) in 1875. The first women's colleges at Oxford, Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville, both opened in 1879. For a more detailed discussion of women's entrance to Oxford University, see Batson, *Her Oxford* (2008).

Hitchin (nearly 30 miles from Cambridge) in 1869. Davies did not actively campaign against the Cambridge Women's Higher Local, but eschewed it for the students of her college, considering the examination a stumbling block that kept standards and expectations for female students low. Instead, students at Hitchin were to sit the same exams as male students and complete their course of study in the same amount of time. Hitchin's students attended organized lectures by Cambridge professors but spent much of their time in remedial work, an inevitable outcome of their secondary education. The disadvantage in secondary education faced by the first students of Cambridge's women's colleges underscores the disparity between male models of higher education and even the best female education of the period.

The advances in female liberal education--the first institution of university education, expanded secondary curricula, and governmental oversight--in the decade 1860 to 1870 represents a response to contemporary socio-cultural perceptions of femininity and of education. They also generated or reanimated such perceptions and themselves fostered discourse about female education, as the remainder of this section will show.

Projects of female education in this decade often employed conventional understandings of womanhood as justification or support. For example, the Taunton Commission's report calls up images of "the educated mother" (Beale *Reports* 1) and the "wife trained and habituated to a life . . . [of] intellectual proficiency, and capacity" (Beale *Reports* 2) to deliver its recommendations for more systematic, liberal female education. Its view of women as responsible "for the maintenance of a higher and more

cultivated tone in society" situates the Taunton Commission as following contemporary rhetoric of woman as society's moral guide, justifying its call for improved education through reference to woman's influence on social and national morality (Beale *Reports* 2). The report's employment of conventional perceptions of womanhood, as well as its repeated reference to the power and longevity of such characterizations, illustrates both the power of these definitions of femininity as well as their application to perceptions of female education.

Beale, in an address to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science similarly employs conventional visions of femininity to justify girls' secondary education, defining education as training girls "so that they may best perform that subordinate part in the world, to which I believe they have been called" ("Address" 123). Buss likewise championed education as a means of producing lady-like women as well as capable daughters, wives, and mothers in her weekly addresses to North London Collegiate. Even Davies, in *The Higher Education of Women* (1866) references this rhetoric, acknowledging that "clearly, no education would be good which did not tend to make good wives and mothers; and that which produces the best wives and mothers is likely to be the best possible education" (5). These references to conventional femininity by pioneers of female secondary and higher education reflect their centrality to mid-Victorian perceptions of women's learning.

Perhaps the most (in)famous articulation of this definition of womanhood and education's duty to foster it is Ruskin's 1864 "Of Queens' Gardens."[22] Defining woman as eminently domestic, with "home . . . always round her" (99), Ruskin identifies "her intellect . . . for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision" (98). "Of Queens' Gardens" posits a specifically feminine end of girls' education, but it does not advocate specifically female subjects of study: "a girl's education should be nearly, in its course and material of study, the same as a boy's" (105). Instead, it locates the gender difference of education in the application of that study, insisting that the female student should learn information "not . . . as objects to know; but only to feel, and to judge" (102). This conclusion that a girl's education should be "quite differently directed" (105) culminates in Ruskin's distinction between a husband's learning and his wife's:

> [A] woman, in any rank of life, ought to know what ever her husband is likely to know, but to know it in a different way. His command of it should be foundational and progressive; hers, general and accomplished for daily and helpful use . . . . a man ought to know any language or science he learns, thoroughly--while a woman ought to know the same language, or science, only so far as may enable her to sympathize in her husband's pleasures, and in that of his best friends. (105)

Additionally, "Of Queens' Gardens" extends feminine sympathy beyond a woman's husband and household. Its definition of woman's "public work or duty [as] . . . an extension" of her private "work or duty, relating to her own home" reiterates the perception of woman as ministering to all mankind (or at least the whole nation) pervasive in rhetoric of English womanhood since the beginning of the century (114).

[22] First delivered as a speech in Manchester in 1864, it was subsequently published with "Of Kings' Treasuries" as *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). It is, quite possibly, the most-cited example of this view of femininity in late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century scholarship, anthologies, and criticism.

"Of Queens' Gardens" calls for an education that trains a woman to be "the helpmeet of man" (86). It also references another significant strand of contemporary rhetoric on female education in its presentation of girls as developing--mentally and physically--more rapidly than boys. It suggests that a girl "should be earlier led . . . into deep and serious subjects" than a boy because "her intellect ripens faster" (106). This theory, that girls' minds develop more quickly than boys' became a key--but also contentious--strain of mid-century discourse on femininity and female education. Because it reinforces the concept of gender difference in mind and body, the theory of girls' more rapid development was frequently cited by opponents of advanced, especially university, education for women. Yet even proponents of better female education acknowledge this developmental precocity, often through reference to concerns with overdevelopment and overstimulation of that natural forwardness.

For example, the Taunton Commission's report cites girls' "greater quickness" and "their acuter susceptibility to praise and blame" as reasons for caution at the use of emulation and examination at girls' schools (Beale *Report* 7). This warning against competitive pedagogical methods suggests that they play upon or incite a girl's natural precocity to generate a physically dangerous tendency to overwork, as well as a mentally or morally dangerous desire for approbation. Cheltenham instituted a system of monitoring each student's study time, to "check too great zeal, and to insist upon the observation of those limits we place to the time devoted to study" in order to rein in such precocity ("Address" 133).

In addition to fears of competitive girls and overworked young women, the concept of girls' precocious maturation generated anxieties about bodily health and gender, thanks to increased attention to human development in the fields of biology, medicine, and the social sciences between 1860 and 1870. Herbert Spencer's 1860 collection of essays, *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, employs contemporary scientific theory to explain the different speeds of male and female mental development, suggesting that the "antagonism between growth and development" (287) is "well illustrated . . . by contrasting the sexes. A girl develops in body and mind rapidly, and ceases to grow comparatively early. A boy's bodily and mental development is slower, and his growth greater" (289). Puberty and the development of the reproductive system were viewed as the primary cause of a woman's rapid development and earlier cessation of growth by Spencer and the medical and scientific professionals who subscribed to the closed system theory of the body. This theory, which posits "that the amount of vital energy which the body at any moment possesses is limited; and that, being limited, it is impossible to get more from it than a fixed quantity of results" was widely accepted and referenced by medical, biological, and social science theories of human biology by mid-century (Spencer 285).

This understanding of the body's vital energy--that which enables growth, development, and daily functions, including thought and study--as fixed or limited gave new urgency to considerations of the female body and reproduction. The understanding that puberty, menstruation, and gestation require large amounts of the body's vital energy led to fears that brain-work would hinder or damage these functions by redirecting much-

needed energy from the reproductive organs to the brain: as Spencer states, "Nature is a strict accountant; and if you demand of her in one direction more than she is prepared to lay out, she balances the account by making a deduction elsewhere" (284).[23] Working from this principle, Spencer's *Education* decries long hours of study and infrequent breaks for physical exercise in the education of both sexes but it is particularly wary of their impact on girls. Such extended mental strain harms the individual woman's health, leading to a "physical degeneracy" evident in the underdeveloped bodies of "pale, angular, flat chested young ladies" already evident at girls' schools (296). Moreover, this redirection of vital energy undermines the health of the race, for "the evil becomes hereditary" as a woman's weakened constitution leads to weakened children (277).

Drawing on evolutionary science, *Education* insists on a balance between physical and mental cultivation on the grounds that "Nature's . . . supreme end, is the welfare of posterity [and] . . . that, insofar as posterity are concerned, a cultivated intelligence based on a bad *physique* is of little worth, seeing that its descendants will die out in a generation or two" (297-98). *Education*'s articulation of how study can affect natural bodily processes and lead to the physical degeneration of individuals and races adds scientific weight to earlier medical anxieties about the female body, reproduction, and femininity. These anxieties about "angular, flat chested young ladies," their bodies perverted by mental application, establish the ubiquity as well as the power of the

[23] Such anxieties about the spending of vital energy applied to men as well as women, as exhibited in the Victorians' intense concern with the deleterious effects of masturbation.

concept of the gendered mind and body to perceptions of femininity and female education in Victorian England.

Yet not all Victorians accepted the inherent differences of male and female minds and bodies. For example, John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) challenges the notion that "anyone knows, or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another" (149). *Subjection* opposes the basis of much contemporary gender theory by characterizing womanhood as cultivated, not biologically essential: "what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others" (149). *The Subjection of Women* defines its titular condition in terms of this artificiality and repression, emphasizing "the dull and hopeless life to which it so often condemns them by forbidding them to exercise the practical abilities many of them are conscious of" (214). This vision of woman as cramped and hampered by her education and cultural conditioning presents her "dull and hopeless life" as a sort of physical and mental confinement.

To women advocates of female education, a prime manifestation of this confinement was the ideal of genteel leisure for middle- and upper-class women.[24] Like Grey and Shirreff, Davies repeatedly insists on the harmful effects of idleness on women's lives and minds. For example, in 1863 she disputes the common assumption

[24] Davies's writings clearly mark out collegiate higher education as the province of the upper middle classes. For example, in "Some Account of a Proposed New College for Women" (1868), Davies envisions the new college as populated with "the sisters of the young men who go to Oxford and Cambridge"-- girls who are "scattered about in country houses and parsonages, and in the families of professional men and retired merchants and manufacturers" (12).

that over-study will drive a woman mad, arguing "that mental disease is produced by want of occupation as well as by excess of it" ("Influence" 12). In *The Higher Education of Women* (1866) Davies contends that the industrialization and gentrification of the middle classes has led to less domestic work for women while their haphazard, too-soon-ended education leaves them lacking the motives and ability for continued study or real usefulness. For example, *Higher Education* claims that "at the moment when they need the support of a routine explained and justified by a reasonable purpose, discipline and stimulus are at once withdrawn, leaving in their place no external support beyond the trivial demands and restraints of conventional society" (*Higher Education* 63). The average upper-middle-class girl out of the school-room "looks around her and sees no particular call to active exertion . . . so long as she is quiet and amiable, and does not get out of health, nobody wants her to do anything," and so languishes in the idle triviality Davies associates with conventional views of femininity (*Higher Education* 48).[25]

As the antidote for women's harmful idleness, Davies prescribes a longer, more thorough course of education, for "what is so conducive to health and happiness as regular, interesting occupation?" ("Some Account" 15). Such an education aims not to put women "on a pinnacle of distinction, but to make them useful laborers" at home and

[25] Davies joins the chorus of voices identifying parental adherence to "conventional society" as a prime cause of this dangerous idleness and of the shallowness of female education generally. For example, the Taunton Commission's report identifies "a main obstacle to improvement" of girls' secondary education as "the apathy and want of cooperation, often the actual opposition, of to many of the parents" who "look chiefly for pecuniary results" and "oppose what is not showy and attractive" (Beale *Reports* 20-21). Beale attributes a lack of progress to parents who judge the value of an education by its expense and its outward effects, or who change schools "for a passing fancy" or "a high reputation" ("Address" 126). Ruskin similarly complains of parents who "bring up . . . girls as if they were meant for sideboard ornaments" (109).

in society (*Higher Education* 99). Upon this definition of learning as encouraging health, happiness, and utility Davies builds her argument for women's higher education. She presents a woman's college years as "a temporary stage, a preparation for the duties of life, whatever they may prove to be" ("Some Account" 17). Higher education will ensure "that what ever they do shall be done well . . . whether as mistresses of households, mothers, teachers, or as laborers in art, science, literature, and . . . the field of philanthropy" ("Some Account" 16).

To Davies, the end of women's higher education is the same as that of men's higher education, the "preparation for the duties of life," and she consistently advocates that the means of education be the same as well ("Some Account" 17). For example, she questions the imposed limitations on girls' learning by asking,

> [W]hy should simple equations brighten their intellects, and quadratic equations drive them into a lunatic asylum? Why should they be the better for the three books of Euclid . . . and 'stupefied' by conic sections or trigonometry? Why should Latin give them a deeper insight into the philosophy of language . . . and the language of the New Testament be forbidden as too exhausting, a toil fruitful only of imbecility or death? . . . Would a knowledge of physiology make them worse mothers, and an acquaintance with the chemistry of food less fit to superintend the processes of cooking? ("Influence" 10)

Beyond foregrounding the logical inconsistencies in common prohibitions against particular subjects (or, as the above quotation suggests, higher forms of nearly every branch of learning), this statement exposes anxieties about learning's negative impact on the female mind and body in its references to the "lunatic asylum," stupefaction, exhaustion, and "imbecility or death" as outcomes of girls' educational efforts.

Davies's writings and her actions, particularly her part in the opening of the Cambridge Local, the Taunton Commission, and a university college to women, bespeak the progress of women's education during the 1860s. The remaining three decades of the nineteenth century saw a continuation of progress in terms of access to education and curricular advancement. However, popular attitudes towards women's education often continued in the vein of what Davies represents as the prejudice of conventional society: "Much learning would make her mad, and would wholly unfit her for those quiet domestic offices for which Providence intended her. She . . . would become cold, calculating, masculine, fast, strong-minded, and, in a word, generally unpleasing" ("Influence" 5).

**EDUCATION 1870 TO 1900**

The last decades of the nineteenth century saw the sapling movement for middle- and upper-class women's education, both secondary and higher, grow and bear fruit. Such progress was also the case for other areas of English education. For example, the increased government oversight during the previous decade culminated in the 1870 Elementary Education Act, which created local school boards to create schools, modify existing ones, and oversee an area's elementary education for children from age five to age thirteen.[26]

[26] Boards had the power to make education compulsory, and to provide schooling free of charge if necessary, but neither provision was mandated by the 1870 Act. The 1880 Elementary Education Act established compulsory attendance, and the 1891 Elementary Education Act made elementary education at a board school, one funded and administered by the local school board, free to the student.

In the early 1890s, the Bryce Commission on Secondary Education revisited the grounds of the Taunton Commission. Its recommendations, published in an 1895 report, included more systematic training for secondary school teachers, more attention to liberal education in the midst of increasingly technical curricula, and revised quotas for the number of students in each "grade" of secondary school. The Bryce Commission also included women as committee members, the first Royal Commission to do so. In addition to their increasing participation in governmental oversight of education through Royal Commissions and municipal school boards, women continued to build schools and advance curriculum at the secondary level as well as to expand women's access to and recognition by English universities in the period from 1870 to 1900.

The pattern for girls' secondary education set in the 1860s by schools like North London Collegiate and Cheltenham spread during the period 1870 to 1900. One means of the spread, the Girls Public Day School Company (GPDSC), grew out of the National Union for the Education of Women of All Classes Above the Elementary, which was formed by Shirreff and Grey, among other prominent educators in 1871. From the period 1872 to 1901, the GPDSC opened 38 schools ranging "as far north as Carlisle and Newcastle, as far south as Brighton and Portsmouth, as far east as Ipswich and Norwich, as far west as Liverpool . . . and Swansea" (Magnus 52). With these schools, which became known as High Schools in the 1880s, came a curriculum geared towards the Oxford and Cambridge Higher Local examinations. The standard course in the junior department included "English grammar and literature, history, geography, French and German, the elements of physical science, drawing, classes singing and harmony," while

the senior department added "more advanced classes in ancient and modern languages, history, mathematics, the elements of moral science and logic, physiology as applied to the laws of health, and elementary economics" (Kamm 50).

The GPDSC schools remained influential models of female secondary education through the end of the century, not least because of the large number of High School girls who populated the early generations of women university students and secondary school teachers. Independent schools for girls also flourished during the final decades of the nineteenth century, offering day and boarding options, as well as a range of religious affiliations, to parents of middle- and upper-class girls.[27] Though a standardized course of schooling became more accessible for girls of the middle classes by the end of the century, many still received part (or all) of their education at home. Indeed, home-schooled women formed a substantial portion of the first generation of students at what would become Newnham and Girton Colleges, Cambridge.

A similar pattern of expansion and or extension marks women's higher education in the final decades of the nineteenth century. In 1871, Merton Hall (later Newnham College), the residence for women students taking the preparatory course for the Cambridge Women's examination, opened. In 1872, the women's college founded by Emily Davies moved from Hitchin to just outside Cambridge at Girton. There, with greater access to professors, lectures, and facilities, the college continued to adhere to Cambridge's degree schedule, though women did not sit the tripos until 1881. In 1882,

[27] For a comprehensive study of these late-century schools, see Avery, *The Best Type of Girl: a History of Girls' Independent Schools* (1991).

Cambridge awarded certificates to those women who passed the degree and honors examinations, a step forward from the era in which girls' examination results were reported without their names. Oxford similarly opened its lectures and exams to women incrementally. The first women's halls, Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville, began accepting students in 1879, following the institution of Oxford's Woman's Higher Local and the foundation of the Association for Promoting the Education of Women in Oxford in 1878. Women students were barred from attending lectures in men's colleges until the early 1880s, and the requirement for chaperones was not lifted until 1893. Oxford's degree and honors examinations opened to women in 1884, but the university did not award women degrees until the 1920s.

Oxford and Cambridge, though aged and venerable, were not the only universities in England, and they were certainly not the first to recognize women's claims for higher education. The University of London extended its charter to award degrees to women in 1878. Still an examining and degree-granting university until the end of the century, the University of London made no provision for preparing female degree candidates. Instead, the majority of women who studied for a University of London degree did so at Bedford College and Cheltenham through the 1880s. Outside London and Oxbridge, English universities gradually extended higher education to female students, as at the University of Manchester, where women's education began with access to select lectures in 1860s, led to registered students in 1870s, and ended with their admission to degrees in 1887. Others ostensibly opened degrees to women, as the University of Durham did in 1881, but maintained strict residency requirements that often effectively excluded women

students.[28] A few, such as the University of Bristol, opened in 1876, welcomed women students from their inception.[29] The progress made in opening not only university training but also rigorous secondary schooling to women and girls over the course of the nineteenth century impacted middle-class women by raising the expectations and opportunities for their education.

Just as the period from 1870 to 1899 saw the continuation and extension of efforts for women's increased access to schooling and for the meaningful content of that schooling, the final decades of the century also saw a continuation of earlier discourses about female education. One such discourse, medico-scientific definitions of womanhood, became especially prominent in the 1870s and 1880s. Evolved from concerns with hygiene and physiology in the 1850s and with evolution and reproduction in the 1860s, the concept of "sex in mind" entered public discussion of women's education in 1870s. One of the most publicized and discussed articulations of this theory appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in early 1874. Through commentaries, replies, and reviews, it spilled out into a number of general-audience periodicals and thus into the public consciousness. Dr. Henry Maudsley opened the debate with his article "Sex in Mind and in Education," which begins with the assertion that women have "special functions, and must have a special sphere of development and activity determined by the performance of those functions" (22).

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[28] Both Oxford and Cambridge similarly leaned on their residency requirements when refusing to admit women to degrees or university membership (see Batson).

[29] Carol Dyehouse treats these early years of women's higher education, with an emphasis on gender equality, in *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities, 1870-1939* (1995).

From its insistence that women's "special functions" (reproduction and motherhood) necessitate special treatment, "Sex in Mind and in Education" insists that female students require a special "system of education adapted to women" that would "have regard to the peculiarities of their constitution, to the special functions in life for which they are destined, and to the range and kind of practical activity, mental and bodily, to which they would seem to be foreordained by their sexual organization of body and mind" (51). This concept of body and mind as "foreordained by . . . sexual organization" forms the crux of Maudsley's argument: sexual maturation and the reproductive organs influence the brain through its "definite paths of nervous communication" with the organs (35). Just as they gender the body during puberty, the reproductive organs gender the mind, leading to the "female qualities of mind which correlate her sexual character [and] adapt her, as her sex does, to be the helpmeet and companion of man" (40).

Having established that "there is sex in mind as distinctly as there is sex and body," Maudsley warns against any education that attempts to "assimilate the female to the male mind" --that is, employs subjects and pedagogical methods used in the education of boys and men, in effect, all existing higher education and a good deal of secondary education (35). Such an education will render the female student "a monstrosity--something which having ceased to be woman is yet not man" (46). Placing paramount power in the reproductive system, Maudsley contends that no mental effort could completely unsex a woman. However, he maintains that mental exertion, by monopolizing vital energy, can harm the reproductive organs which determine the bodily

and mental expression of gender. Thus, "excessive educational strain," especially during puberty, can lead to the debility of gendered body and gendered mind (46). Drawing on the contemporary understanding of puberty and menstruation as involving "an extraordinary expenditure of vital energy" (which Edward Tilt advanced in the 1850s and which the theory of the closed energy system supports), Maudsley warns that excessive mental exertion during puberty and menstruation will result in "baneful effects upon female health" (42). These "baneful effects" include "injury to their functions as the conceivers, mothers, and nurses of children," which will, in turn, lead to "a puny, enfeebled, and sickly race" (39). Taken as a whole, "Sex in Mind and in Education" draws together a number of strands of medical and rhetorical concepts of "the ideal of . . . womanhood" in the mid-Victorian era (42).

"Sex in Mind and in Education" also brought medico-scientific theories to a wider, lay audience, fueling debates about womanhood, femininity, and the means and ends of education. Maudsley's article generated direct responses, such as Elizabeth Garrettt Anderson's "Sex in Mind and Education: a Reply" in the *Fortnightly Review*.[30] Garrett Anderson challenges Maudsley's contention that following traditionally male forms of education will injure the health and gender of female students. She refutes Maudsley's vision of girls debilitated and deranged by study during puberty and menstruation, maintaining that Maudsley's "assertion that, as a rule, girls are not able to

[30] The first female licensed physician in England (she privately completed the standard course of study with tutors in England, apprenticed under an apothecary, and was the first woman to earn an M.D. from the University of Paris in 1870), Garrett Anderson campaigned for women's access to medical and higher education at British universities throughout her life (see Elston).

go on with an ordinary amount of quiet exercise and mental work during these periods, seems to us to be entirely contradicted by experience" (59). Garrett Anderson further contends that "a higher and more serious education" (55) effectively combats the real cause of female maladies, frivolity and idleness: "from the purely physiological point of view, it is difficult to believe that study . . . would do a girl's health as much harm as a life directly calculated to overstimulate the emotional and sexual instincts, and to weaken the guiding and controlling forces which these instincts so imperatively need" (63). She alleges that the cases of breakdown from overwork "could be outnumbered many times over . . . by those in which the breakdown of nervous and physical health seems at any rate to be distinctly traceable to want of adequate mental interest and occupations in the years immediately succeeding school life" (64). Like Davies, Grey, and Shirreff, among others, Garrett Anderson proposes "a higher and more serious education" not as a cause of, but as a cure for women's nervous and bodily maladies through its ability to regulate the mind and to give women meaningful occupation (55). In its recasting of earlier rhetorics of female education, the "sex in mind" debate powerfully exhibits not only how medical definitions of gender increasingly inflected arguments for and against women's education but also the persistence of conventional conceptions of women's bodies, minds, and lives.

Later discussions of bodily influence on mind, such as George Romanes's 1887 essay for the *Nineteenth Century*, "Mental Differences Between Men and Women," indicate how scientific work continued to reinforce conventional views of woman. Concerned with "secondary sexual characters of the mental kind" (169), this article

leverages medico-scientific evidence, such as the 'fact' that "the average brain weight of women is about 5 ounces less than that of man" as well as that "the gray matter, or cortex, of the female brain is shallower than that of the male . . . [and] also receives less than a proportional supply of blood" (170) in order to establish that female minds naturally tend toward "affection, sympathy, devotion, self-denial, modesty; long-suffering . . . reverence, religious feeling, and general morality," that is, conventional femininity (174). "Mental Differences" also traces woman's incapacity for prolonged study or original thought,[31] to her weaker physical form, noting that female physical "inferiority displays itself most conspicuously in a comparable absence of originality, and this most especially in the higher levels of intellectual work" (170).

This view of gender as evolutionarily-created means that education cannot affect femininity because it is always already structured into the mind and body: "learning, as learning, can never tend to deteriorate those qualities" (186). Therefore, Romanes does not believe that education will physically unsex the female student as had Maudsley, Spencer, and Tilt before him. Instead, he worries that schools place "absolutely no check . . . on the ambition of young girls to distinguish themselves" and thus lead clever girls to ambition and competition, which are traits expressly reserved for the male in his Darwinian system of evolution. Though an advanced education will not threaten the physical gender of the studious girl, "Mental Differences" suggests that it can lead to an

[31] This characterization of women as lacking the capacity for original thought or for high artistic production was commonly invoked in discussions of the female mind since mid-century. For example, an opponent of "female emancipation" writing in the *Contemporary Review* in 1869 controverts the principle that men and women possess equal intellectual ability by demanding that someone "explain how it is that in so many ages we have no single instance recorded of a woman who has attained the highest eminence in art, or science, or literature" (Mayor 217).

ambition that threatens her femininity by encouraging masculine competition and selfishness.

Such unease about girls' scholarly ambition remained powerful through the end of the century, and anxiety about women abandoning traditional, feminine roles in favor of the chance to distinguish themselves in learning and in professions was not exclusive to medico-scientific commentators on women's education. Advocates of traditional modes of femininity also envisioned higher education as encouraging ambition and the rejection of domesticity, motherhood, and femininity. For example, in her popular 1868 essay on "The Girl of the Period," Eliza Lynn Linton defines the "ideal of womanhood" through familial relationships and home duties: the true woman is "her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival; one . . . who would make his house his true home and place of rest . . . a tender mother, and industrious housekeeper, a judicious mistress" ("Girl" 1-2). Linton's 1886 article on "The Higher Education of Women" presents this "ideal of womanhood" as having no use for a university education: "her knowledge of Greek and German will not help her to understand the management of her nursery; nor will her ability to solve all the problems of Euclid teach her to solve . . . the coordination of expenditure with means" ("Higher Education" 130). Nor will specialized study make a woman more attractive to potential husbands, for though "men want intelligent companions in their wives" they do not "want to the specialized companionship of a like education" ("Higher Education" 136).

Not only does higher education fail to prepare women for the tasks of the wife, mother, and housekeeper, but it also has the potential to disinterest her in these

providential roles. To Linton, girls ambitious for their own distinction pursue university education as a means of evading family responsibilities. They attend "Girton and Newnham . . . not mean[ing] to practically profit by their education" but because they "want to escape from the narrow limits of home and . . . yearn and after the quasi-independence of college life" ("Higher Education" 128). These girls, who neglect a daughter's home duties in favor of the "independence of college life," become women who will neglect their children and leave their domestic and maternal duties to be performed by "subordinates who will not put into their work either the love or the conscience of the wife" and mother ("Higher Education" 136). The scholarly woman thus endangers the family by providing it with sub-par care and sickly offspring. This negative vision of the educated woman reinforces Linton's definition of woman's true role as helpmeet to her husband and family as well as nursemaid to the coming race.

Charlotte Yonge, frequently cited alongside Linton as an example of the "anti-feminist"[32] Victorian woman writer, also advocates traditional, domestic and familial womanhood, basing her depiction of woman-as-helpmeet in High-Anglican Christianity. Her 1877 monograph on the subject, *Womankind*, opens with her "full belief in the inferiority of women," for woman, in Eve, was "the first to fail" God's test of obedience and thus merits "her punishment of physical weakness and subordination" (1.1). Though it suggests the possibility of pre-Fall equality between Adam and Eve, *Womankind* at the

[32] See, for example, Sturrock, Schaffer, and *Antifeminism and the Victorian Novel: Rereading Nineteenth Century Women Writers* (2009).

same time characterizes woman as Providentially subordinate, defining her as "created as a helpmeet to man" (1.1).

However, linking the position of helpmeet to Christian ideals invests woman with dignity and power, for *Womankind* defines her as "the helpmeet of man, not necessarily of any individual man, but of the whole Body whom Christ our Lord has left to be waited on as Himself" (1.6). This vision of the helpmeet places woman's service as first to God and second to man: she is a servant of the Lord, not "the wife, or even the sister or daughter attached to the aid of some particular man" like a "slave" or "squaw" (1.4). Not only does Christianity free women from the degrading status of "appendage to some individual man," it also elevates their divinely instituted role of helpmeet, making service the hallmark not (only) of the woman but of the Christian (1.6). Thus, within *Womankind*'s creed of women's "inferiority" lies an equally forceful belief in the power of the subordinate, servant position (1.1).

Yet *Womankind*'s emphasis on the helpmeet as a Christian as much as a female role does not liberate woman from domestic and familial definitions. Indeed, *Womankind* envisions a woman's life as continually in service to her family, for "[i]t is almost certain that she will begin as helpmeet to her father or brothers," and imagining this every-woman as advancing to either "the divinely ordained state of marriage" or "attendance on a parent" with adulthood (1.6). Only after exhausting "all those obvious family claims that Providence marked out" shall she turn to "some special outer field" (1.6). Family claims and home duties are figured as Providential--given by God-- thus giving them primacy among a woman's concerns. Even her extra-domestic vocation is re-inscribed

into the familial, for "His Church is the visibly present mother to guide them; and as daughters of the Church their place and occupation is found" (1.6).

For Yonge, true womanhood consists primarily in service--the "help" in "helpmeet." By defining femininity through "home usefulness," Yonge inscribes active self-renunciation into gendered behavior (*The Daisy Chain* 1.302). Indeed, *Womankind* identifies "self-will" and "self-love" as antithetical to femininity: "there is no true success or happiness for any woman who has not learned to efface her self" (22.183). *Womankind* asserts that "woman's best portion, the primary object of her creation" is her being "self forgetting, self devoted, and viewing the utmost sacrifice of herself as simply natural" (22.190). This Christian understanding of a femininity aligns with conventional definitions of womanhood that stress the home and family as woman's proper sphere, and such visions of woman's true mission as helpmeet to mankind only strengthened in the final decade of the nineteenth century thanks to growing fears of racial degeneration as well as anxieties about the "New Woman." I conclude this historical overview by briefly considering a pair of texts that demonstrate how concerns with the "New Woman" continue to voice Victorian beliefs and anxieties: Grant Allen's "Plain Words on the Woman Question" (1889), published in the *Fortnightly Review,* and Mrs. Henry Sidgwick's *Health Statistics of Women Students* (1890).

Allen's "Plain Words" opens with the declaration that "in every community, and to all time, the vast majority of the women must become wives and mothers" (212) or else "the race must cease to exist" (214). Given this imperative, Allen advocates a female education that will train girls "physically, morally, socially, and mentally, in the way best

fitting them to be wives and mothers," echoing proponents of conventional modes of femininity and mid-century ideals of female learning (214). Moreover, he draws on the understandings of biological essentialism tied to female education since the 1850s to claim that contemporary education, especially "the movement for the higher education of women," effectively educates women into men by "giving them a like training for totally unlike functions" (215). In Allen's formulation, higher education not only creates "the ideal of an unsexed woman" but also brings that "ideal" to life (214). Alleging that university educated women "became unsexed in the process, and many others acquired a distaste, an unnatural distaste, for the functions which Nature intended them to perform," Allen foregrounds education's capacity to disinterest woman in her "great privilege" as a danger as its capacity to physically disable her for it (215). "Plain Words" registers how anxiety about middle- and upper-class women's reproductive capability (and responsibility) shifts from physical ability to mental and emotional willingness, a shift which mirrors the focus on behavior, morality, and lifestyle the characterizes anxiety about the "New Woman."

Citing "Mr. Grant Allen" as an example of the negative "assertions . . as to the effect of academic education on motherhood" and women's general health, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick published *Health Statistics of Women Students of Cambridge and Oxford and of Their Sisters* in 1890 (66).[33] Based on a survey of personal and familial health histories, educational history, and present health sent to current and former students at

[33] *Née* Balfour, Nora Sidgwick married Henry Sidgwick in 1876. She served as a mathematics tutor and Vice Principal of Newnham Hall in the 1880s. She ascended to the principalship in 1891 (see Fowler).

Girton, Newnham, Lady Margaret Hall, and Somerville (as well as their sister or cousin closest in age who had not attended college), the monograph enabled Sidgwick and her colleagues to refute representations of the university woman as unhealthy, unsexed, or unnatural "by actual statistics" (5).

The surveys' results indicate that "as compared with health at entering, there is a falling off in health at college," but that "throughout life the students in the aggregate maintain a higher standard of health than their sisters" (20). More importantly, in reference to common arguments against women's higher education, Sidgwick's statistics show that "the married students are healthier than their married sisters,--that there are fewer childless marriages among them, that they have a larger proportion of children per year of married life, and that their children are healthier" (66). The statistical evidence thus "afford[s] no support whatsoever to generalizations such as Mr. Grant Allen's" (66). Instead, it proves that "as and mothers of healthy families . . . the students are more satisfactory than their sisters," and, in doing so, it refutes the customary association of the university woman with the "New Woman" who eschews marriage and maternity along with other conventional ideals of female behavior, morality, and lifestyle (91). *Health Statistics* testifies to the century's developments in women's higher education in the sheer number of students it sampled as well as in its portrayal of higher education as good preparation not only for professional work but also for marriage, motherhood, and domestic management. Finally, in use of statistics, a method of proof associated with the "masculine" fields of mathematics and science, to make its claims, *Health Statistics* slyly asserts women's fitness for higher learning.

## CONCLUSION

Over the course of the nineteenth century, women's education did indeed effect something of a revolution. The majority of middle-class girls began the century with access to family schoolrooms or small local day schools, where they were taught reading, writing, basic arithmetic, needlework, some general knowledge, and perhaps accomplishments such as drawing, French, or music. In the case of an elder daughter or a wealthier family, this education would be supplemented with a year or two of finishing at a boarding school that prioritized deportment and accomplishments. By the end of the century, the possibilities for middle-class female education also included academically rigorous secondary schools, which offered instruction in multiple languages (ancient and modern), literature and composition, algebra and geometry, history and geography, chemistry, botany, and physiology as well as opportunities to study the arts and to participate in field sports.[34] Such an education would customarily culminate in an examination, either a Local or a matriculation examination for university study.

The advances gestured to in this brief comparison--of curricular breadth and depth, of institutional advantages, of measures and certifications of learning, and of opportunities for further study--not only confirm the "revolutionary" quality of the progress but also underscore middle-class women's liberal education's role as a venue for cultural, social, medical, and scientific conclusions about gender difference. By the last decades of the century, girls' admittance to the Oxbridge Locals and Higher Locals,

[34] For an outline of recommended secondary curricula in 1898, from which the above list is taken, see the table created by Dorothea Beale entitled "Hours of Study Including Preparation per Week" in *Work and Play in Girls Schools* (1898).

women's taking of degrees at metropolitan universities, and the students' rigid adherence to the Cambridge degree course at Girton all challenged assumptions about the necessity and sagacity of separate spheres of schooling, but concerns with gender difference remained--if not intensified. The increasing interest in gender as a field for medical, biological, and social science study often found ready (or at least public) expression through an application to education. Education became a site for the airing of "facts" about woman's mental capacity, physical organization, and reproductive imperative. These discourses define gender difference as natural, essential, and ineluctable, to be neither created nor (wholly) destroyed by learning.

This chapter's examination of the significant historical events of and rhetorical positions on female education in nineteenth-century England illustrates the real change that took place over the course of the century with regard to female opportunity for schooling and to the content of that schooling. Though I have presented it as an uncomplicated chronology of change, in which women progressively gain access to and acceptance in the fields of secondary and higher education, I do not want to portray the history of women's education in nineteenth-century England as neatly teleological or equally applicable to all women. However simplified, this chapter's historical survey indicates the extent of Victorian society's engagement with both practical and ideological considerations of female education. The Taunton Commission's inclusion of girls' schools indicates a governmental interest in female education and the numerous presentations on female education to the Association for the Promotion of Social Science demonstrates its attraction for specialists. Moreover, the popularity of texts like Shirreff's

and Grey's *Thoughts on Self-Culture* or the furor caused by Maudsley's *Fortnightly Review* essay suggests that the purposes, methods, and effects of female education were a topic of discussion outside lecture halls, specialist meetings, and committee hearings--that it sustained a wide, general audience. I do not claim that women's education was constantly discussed by all segments of society, but I do want to show that it remained, with varying intensity and emphases, a social or cultural concern for the majority of the century. The learning and learned female characters of the mid-Victorian novel, then, represent direct engagements with an evolving, significant strand of contemporary society.

## Chapter 2: "As good for household matters as for books": Learning Femininity in Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman of the Family*

Writing near the end of her half-century as a novelist, Charlotte Yonge recalled her entry into authorship: "I cannot forget, however, my father, before taking any steps about *Abbey Church*, gravely putting it before me that there were three reasons for which one might desire to publish--love of vanity, or love of gain, or the wish to do good. I answered, with tears, that I really hoped I had written with the purpose of being useful to young girls like myself" ("Lifelong" 696). I begin with this recollection not only because it both prefaces and sums up (as a memory of the beginning) Yonge's career but also because it articulates central components of her fiction. The figure of her father evokes the coterie of family and friends who critiqued her works and directed their profits throughout her life. Her answer identifies the audience to whom her novels would speak most powerfully, "girls like myself," and the repeated reference to utility--"the wish to do good" and "the purpose of being useful"--underscores her conception of literature as a means of instruction and improvement.

Yonge's emphasis on literature's power to instruct and to improve the reader makes her a particularly Victorian novelist. So too do her career's close alignment with Victoria's reign,[35] and its success in the two genres most associated with women writers in the nineteenth century: the periodical and the novel. In both genres, Yonge's writings

[35] Her first collection of tales, *Le Chateau de Melville,* was privately printed in 1839, and her last published piece, *Why I Am a Catholic and Not a Roman Catholic*, appeared in 1901. Queen Victoria ruled England from 1837 until her death in 1901.

combined a didactic mission with popularity among those it would instruct. For example, the magazine she founded in 1851 and edited until 1891, *The Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Members of the English Church*, defines itself as a help and guide. The "Introductory Letter" to the first issue presents it as "meant to be in some degree a help to those who are thus forming it [their character]; not as a guide . . . but as a companion in times of recreation" (qtd. in Romanes 46). The letter's delineation of *The Monthly Packet*'s intended audience again foregrounds education, identifying "the readers for whom this . . . is intended [as] young girls, or maidens, or young ladies . . . who are above the age of childhood, and who are either looking back on school-days . . . or else pursuing the most important part of education, namely self-education" (qtd. in Romanes 45). Its half-century of existence speaks to *The Monthly Packet*'s success in capturing the hearts and minds of its readers.

Even more successful was Yonge's first novel, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), which captured the heart of a nation at war with its detailed evocation of English domesticity. The novel was considered required reading by British officers in the Crimea, and it seems to have had almost the same effect on civilians at home. In fact, members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, particularly William Morris and D. G. Rossetti, took the novel's hero, Guy Morville, as a model for their own interest in medieval culture and chivalry. It was followed by a string of popular novels including *Heartsease* (1854), which Charles Kingsley praised as "the most delightful and wholesome novel I ever read" (qtd. in Coleridge 384), *The Young Stepmother* (1861), which Tennyson famously could not put down, *The Daisy Chain, or Aspirations* (1856) and its sequel *The Trial:*

*More Links in the Daisy Chain* (1864), and *The Pillars of the House, or Under Wode, Under Rode* (1873). Yonge continued to produce novels into the twentieth century, often returning to familiar characters and families, but these efforts failed to gain the wide audience of her early novels.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, Yonge's novels, in which "trying to be good was made interesting and romantic," had largely fallen out of favor with reading audiences and critics alike (Romanes 183). Tamara Wagner identifies the very domesticity responsible for her early success as one cause of Yonge's later neglect, arguing that though "Yonge contributed to the formation of domestic realism as a central factor in the success of Victorian popular fiction . . . [her] focus on the domestic has caused her to be branded as antifeminist, conservative, and didactic" ("Novelist" 213). The consistent championing of self-sacrifice, deference to Church and parental authority, and interdependence in Yonge's novels jars with twentieth- and twenty-first-century ideals of capitalist individualism. Moreover, these values, and their application to female characters, have frequently led readers and scholars to classify Yonge's work as "anti-feminist," thereby situating her work outside the modern feminist recovery of popular women writers.[36] The recent critical resurgence of Yonge studies has instead been driven by studies of Tractarian aesthetics,[37] and disability studies.[38] This chapter's readings

[36] For example, Sturrock discusses "Yonge's particular brand of antifeminism" (13), while Mare and Percival account for *The Clever Woman of the Family*'s lack of popularity by the fact that "by the feminists growing up in the latter half of the century Rachel [the heroine] was condemned as a piece of propaganda on the opposite side" (199).

[37] See recent work by Budge, Jay, and Colón.

[38] See recent work by Chen, Wagner, Holmes, and Hale.

engage with concepts and conclusions from work on Yonge in both Tractarian aesthetics and disability studies, but attempt to suspend judgments about antifeminism.

Yonge's literary *oeuvre*, if not as broadly representative of the Victorian zeitgeist as her career's length is of the period's span, at least intersects with three key Victorian concerns: education, religious faith, and "the woman question." After considering how Yonge's intellectual and religious education shapes her understanding of womanhood and of literature, this chapter reads two of her mid-Victorian novels, *The Daisy Chain, or Aspirations* (1856) and *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865). These novels' depictions of learning and learned young women dramatize a central component of the mid-Victorian discourse on female education: the perceived mutual exclusivity of intellectuality and femininity.

## "I HAVE ALWAYS VIEWED MYSELF AS A SORT OF INSTRUMENT FOR POPULARIZING CHURCH VIEWS": YONGE ON LEARNING AND LITERATURE

Though the fields of disability studies and Tractarian aesthetics have led to renewed interest in Yonge's literary work, she remains a relatively marginal figure in the field of Victorian literature. Additionally, because her personal understandings of religion, learning, and femininity directly influence her novels, I begin with a brief examination of her intellectual and religious education and the effects of her learning on her perceptions and productions of literature. Charlotte Mary Yonge was born in 1823 in Otterbourne, Hampshire. Her education took place entirely at home and was as thorough as her mother, educated at a fashionable boarding school, and her father, educated at Eton before joining the 52nd Regiment, could make it. Starting when she was eleven, Yonge's

father began teaching her Latin along with her younger brother, Julian. Julian was six years younger than Charlotte, and she, "who of course went on the fastest," recalls "having to help him to learn," thereby defending or legitimating her own intellectual learning by putting it at the service of a male family member (Coleridge 107). In the course of her home education, which "went on till I was some years past twenty," Yonge learned conventionally feminine subjects as well as Greek, Euclidean geometry, and algebra (Coleridge 108).

Yonge's love of and facility for learning found confirmation in her firm adherence to Tractarian Anglicanism. John Keble, who became vicar of Hursley in 1836 had previously served as the Oxford Professor of Poetry, and as a leading Tractarian, he viewed education as an essential element of spiritual development, a means of transmitting and understanding Church doctrines and traditions.[39] At Hursley, Keble encouraged Sunday School teaching, the building of schools--such as the girls' school for which Yonge printed and sold *Le Chateau de Melville*--and himself prepared the parish youth for confirmation. Yonge came under his tutelage in 1838 and considered his personal instruction to be "the one especial blessing of my life" (Coleridge 119). Keble's espousal of deep knowledge, reserve, and a self-effacing Christianity that "reinforced but also generalized feminine and domestic virtues" along with an interest in literature resonated with Yonge's early training and her own personal inclinations (Sturrock

[39] R. W. Church's *History of the Oxford Movement* (1891) identifies Keble's assize sermon of 1833 on "National Apostasy" as the opening salvo of the Oxford Movement. Keble wrote nine of the *Tracts for the Times*, beginning with number four in 1833 and ending with number 89 in 1841. After Newman's conversion in 1845, Keble continued to theorize and defend Tractarian Anglicanism, and he remained an influential voice for High Church beliefs until his death in 1866.

*Heaven* 23). He became not only Yonge's spiritual mentor but also her literary mentor, exposing her to the ideas of the Oxford intelligentsia. Elisabeth Jay has suggested that, through her intimacy with the Kebles, Yonge "in effect . . . gained admission to the literary tastes and pursuits of Oxford common rooms" (47). Along with his wife and sister, Keble held a prominent place in the network of family and close friends who read and criticized Yonge's work in manuscript, forming what Coleridge calls her "private public" (166).

Keble thus shaped Yonge's writing by defining the Christian outlook that her novels, stories, and essays present to readers. He also shaped her writing directly, changing words in *The Heir of Redclyffe* and excising a speech in *Heartsease* in which a young woman calls the heart "only a machine for pumping blood" (qtd. in Mare and Percival 133). One of his concerns for *Conversations on the Catechism*, "whether, when the ladies quote Greek, they had better not say they have heard their fathers and brothers say things," registers an ambivalence about female erudition while demonstrating the extent of his involvement with Yonge's work (qtd. in Romanes 80). Under Keble's guidance, Yonge styled herself as a "sort of instrument for popularizing church views," dedicating her writing to spreading the views and virtues of Tractarian Anglicanism (qtd. in Sutherland 686).

From her earliest biographers to modern critics, especially those interested in Tractarian aesthetics, Yonge's readers have considered the influence of her religious

beliefs on her perceptions and presentations of contemporary social and cultural issues.[40] The primarily female audience of *The Monthly Packet,* and, after *The Heir of Redclyffe*, of her novels (many of which first appeared in *The Monthly Packet*) gave Yonge a sort of mission to interpret femininity to her readership. June Sturrock's characterization of Yonge's *oeuvre* as "an endless engagement with the subject of proper femininity" is only a slight exaggeration (*Heaven* 26). And proper femininity, for Yonge, depends upon proper Christianity. Her responses to the "woman question," whether obliquely in novels or directly in articles in *The Monthly Packet*, originate from Church teaching and emphasize the twin authorities of family and Church. Indeed, as Catherine Storr asserts, for Yonge, "the authority of the human parent was intimately equated with the divine authority of the Anglican Church . . . . and often the orthodoxy to both Church and family is closely correlated in the narrative" of her novels (110-11). This equation of--or dual allegiance to--family and Church leads to what Wagner calls Yonge's "religion of domesticity" and "faith in familial relationships" ("Led" 307). For Yonge, "the woman question" must be answered with reference to this concept of the Christian woman as helpmeet to mankind and as always inscribed within the family, whether the nuclear family or that of the Church, as in *The Monthly Packet*'s mission to make of its readers to "more steadfast and dutiful daughters of our own beloved Catholic Church of England" (qtd. in Romanes 46-47). Her novels constitute Yonge's most oblique, but also her widest

[40] A reviewer in *The Saturday Review* in March 1856 underscores the religious valence of even the quotidian details of daily life in Yonge's novels, maintaining that "It is quite right to do everything for the love of God, and it is quite right, if our shoe is untied, to tie it, but it is not right to tell our friends that we tie our shoe for the love of God. This is what all the children of Dr. May are doing throughout *The Daisy Chain*" (417).

reaching, medium for addressing the woman question and for "popularizing church views."

Yonge's novels consistently garner praise for the subtlety of their didacticism, particularly the novels' ability, as Susan Griffin identifes, to instruct readers "narratively--that is, in and through their plots and characters" (qtd. in "Depressed" 278).[41] In the words of a review of *The Trial* in 1864, "the moral is not thrust offensively forward," in contrast to contemporary "tracts showing how everyone who takes a Sunday trip or a Sunday row must or ought to be smashed or drowned" ("Miss Yonge's New Novel" 770). Yet Yonge often claimed that the moral served as the impetus for the plot that delivers it: *Hopes and Fears, or Scenes from the Life of a Spinster* (1860) grew out an anxiety about the tendency towards hero-worship in young women. Similarly, she maintained that *The Daisy Chain*'s "root idea was the danger of ambition" and its "characters were all conceived with the notion of impressing this moral" (Coleridge 183). Her advice to prospective authors in *Womankind* reveals the centrality of "being useful" to Yonge's understanding of authorship. For example, *Womankind*'s chapter on "Money-Making" warns against viewing authorship "as a mere trade for gaining money," and stresses "the duty of keeping the works themselves up to a high, pure standard that may benefit, not degrade, the readers" (26.228-29). It also sets out "certain rules" for writers, "namely, to consider whether what is written is likely to do harm, or leave a bad impression" (26.227) and to "be quite sure you have something to say, teach, or tell before you write it" (26.228). Though "something of wit and pathos may have to be

[41] Among modern critics, see Colón, Wagner, and Wolff.

sacrificed" to these rules of useful, beneficial writing, "the better so by far than leave a mischievous impression" (26.228). This emphasis on the didactic end of all (good) fiction suggests that the author's duty is not to create an audience open to impressions and instruction, but to deliver material that will teach and benefit an already-open readership. This avowed didacticism is central to the following readings of *The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman* because it casts their characters as deliberate examples (good and bad) of what girls and women are and should be.

Equally crucial to these readings is Yonge's particular didactic method, which works primarily through identification. This identification is generated in large part by the realism particularly associated with Yonge's characters.[42] An 1856 review of *The Daisy Chain* in *The New Quarterly Review* captures this realism and identification, finding that "we do not think of them as characters in a book, but as actual people, respecting whom we are entitled to have our own opinions" (335). Similarly, Kathryn Briggs holds that the Charlotte Mary Yonge Society came together in part because, as readers, "we can spend happy hours gossiping about her characters, agreeing and disagreeing about them as heartily as about our personal acquaintances" (21). Ethel Romanes explicitly connects this realism to readerly identification, asserting that "what gives her work value is, first of all, that her characters in the best of her books are all alive and impress themselves upon us . . . . they become real friends, whose tastes, opinions, examples, have directed our own" (177). I call this ability of characters' "tastes,

[42] Recent criticism has begun to challenge the standard view of Yonge as a preeminently realist novelist. See, for example, Wagner's articles connecting Yonge to sensation-literature and work on Tractarian aesthetics by Budge, Jay, and Colón.

opinions, examples" to direct the reader's didactic identification. The realism that makes her characters "actual people" and "real friends" encourages didactic identification in two ways. First, by making the characters like personal acquaintances--rounded characters with whom we become intimately familiar--this realism makes readers more likely to compare the characters to themselves, thus creating an opportunity for identification. Second, it makes the effects of characters' actions, decisions, or behavior appear to be their natural, inevitable consequences. Presenting a character's triumph or downfall as the realistic outcome of his or her character and choices conditions the reader to associate certain behaviors and mindsets with positive or negative consequences.[43] In Yonge's novels, then, the plot is, in some sense, the moral of the story.

Yonge herself highlights the close association between her novels' realism and didactic ends. In a letter to Marianne Dyson during the composition of *The Heir of Redclyffe*, she links the novel's presentation of the main characters directly to apprehension of its moral: "Mama says people will think he [Philip] is the good one to be rewarded, and Guy the bad one punished. I say if stupid people really think so, it will be just what I should like, for it would be very like the different morals caught by different people from real life" (qtd. in Coleridge 177). Yonge's novels thus project realism in the ambiguity of their characters, and enact it through that ambiguity by forcing readers to catch their own morals as they would from "real life."

[43] Colón finds that this identification also conditions the reader's moral response: "Yonge conceived that moral choice follows from a person's perspective on that choice, and that one's perspective in turn follows from the set of associations one has formed. In this view, novels are not moral because the recommend virtue and condemn vice . . . but rather because they draw the reader into the process of forming associations that enable accurate judgment . . . . [they] educate . . . the reader in the right interpretation of character and circumstance" ("Realism and Parable" 34).

Writing from a modern perspective that finds Yonge's novels "almost unpleasantly attractive," Talia Schaffer also identifies this strategy of encouraging readers to identify with characters' personalities, feelings, and goals as a means of bringing them to identify with the novel's moral message (246). However, for Schaffer, didactic identification works only through characters who rebel against the novel's ideology:

> [T]he real drama of all Yonge's novels is the way that her characters initially fight the ideological vice that their author is inexorably closing in upon them, and how they subsequently adjust to the cruel necessity of embracing this paradigm . . . . In the process of working through the reluctance of characters to embrace what she regarded as the truth, Yonge modeled her readers' behavior, showing us how to manage our anger and learn to love her worldview in spite of ourselves. (246-247)

I contend that Schaffer's conclusion that "Yonge's central project . . . is to depict dissidence for the purpose of subduing it" occludes the instructive power of good characters as positive models for readers to emulate, and thus limits both the power of Yonge's characters and of didactic identification (247). Instead, I argue that Yonge's novels' use of didactic identification underscores the connection between literature and social practices that makes fictional girls and women not only illustrations of lived femininity but also models for it. Didactic identification enables Yonge's novels to instill particular ideals of gendered behavior and identity by encouraging readers to identify with, and, to a certain extent, judge for themselves the characters' principles and

practices. Readers saw themselves in Ethel May, and, more importantly, they attempted to be like her.[44]

The use of identification and realism as instructional tools suggests that Yonge's characters reflect contemporary ideas, if not contemporary experiences. I do not claim that Yonge's novels exactly document mid-Victorian lived practices, for her realism consists more in detail than documentary. Instead, I want to establish her novels as dramatizing popular conceptions of youth and family life. Through the realism of Yonge's characters and situations, her depictions of women and girls become fictional examples of and for real-life women and girls. The influence and interplay between fiction and lived practices promote fiction as a grounds for exhibiting and manipulating concepts of "female" and "femininity," and the novel becomes a sort of textbook.

Given the descriptive and prescriptive power of their realism and didacticism, I present Yonge's novels as a fruitful ground for surveying the rhetoric surrounding middle-class female education, particularly in terms of how education interacts with an individual's and society's expectations and performances of femininity. The blend of detailistic realism and didactically-motivated idealism in *The Daisy Chain*'s and *The Clever Woman*'s depictions of intelligent, educated young women dramatizes a belief at the heart of all debates on female education in mid-Victorian England: a perception of an incompatibility between proper femininity and intellectuality. Yonge's novels articulate

[44] This sentiment of emulation (associated particularly with Ethel May of *The Daisy Chain* and Amy Edmonstone of *The Heir of Redclyffe*) animates many of the letters Coleridge includes in the appendix to *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters*. It also appears in Romanes and in the essays of the Charlotte Mary Yonge Fellowship, particularly those published in *A Chaplet for Charlotte Yonge*.

this incompatibility through their plots, making *The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman* especially constructive starting points for this project's analysis of the learning female.

*The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman* establish the binary between intellectuality and proper femininity primarily by force of plot. In both novels, the learned heroine's narrative arc is a progress or re-education: she moves away from intellectual interests towards service to family and community, gaining more feminine traits as she progresses. In *The Daisy Chain*, Ethel May begins the novel as an ungainly, ill-mannered 15-year-old who studies Latin and Greek with her brother and dreams of building a church in Cocksmoor, the neighboring working-class community. When a carriage accident kills her mother, permanently maims her oldest sister, Margaret, and injures her father, Ethel must begin to take on the family responsibilities and home duties she previously neglected in favor of study. As Margaret sinks into invalidism, her sister Flora marries, and her brothers leave home for the clergy, Oxford, and the Navy, Ethel becomes increasingly necessary at home. Faced with the choice of continuing her studies or her Church philanthropy, she reluctantly gives up her classical subjects in order to devote her time and energy to her father, younger siblings, and Cocksmoor. Ethel ends the novel committed to the Church and to her family, serving as her father's primary companion and "a mother to the younger ones" (2.27.593).

Similarly, *The Clever Woman* first presents Rachel Curtis as a severe young woman who disdains interest in home and family in favor of study and progressive ideas. Filled with intellectual superiority and a determination to right injustices against women, Rachel rushes into creating an industrial school for girls with a con-man, Mauleverer.

When the school is exposed as a front for lace-making and the pupils are discovered to be starved and sickly, Rachel's folly becomes public knowledge. Mauleverer cannot be convicted of any crime because of Rachel's management, and one of the pupils dies when Rachel's homeopathic remedies fail to cure her of diphtheria. Soon Rachel's public disgrace and her own serious illness give way to her marriage. Honeymooning at her husband's uncle's parsonage, Rachel recovers her strength and receives an education in her intellectual and spiritual mistakes. She also learns to care for her husband, uncle, orphaned nephew, and the wider community. Just as Ethel ends *The Daisy Chain* as surrogate wife and mother to her father and younger siblings, Rachel ends *The Clever Woman* as "a thorough wife and mother," concerned with educating her children and those of her husband's regiment instead of redressing the wrongs of womankind (30.545).

Even these admittedly broad-stroked plot sketches evince the way in which the novels depict intellectual pursuits and proper femininity as uncomplimentary: a girl must give up or grow out of scholarly girlhood in order to become a feminine woman. Womanhood, as defined by these novels, and by Yonge's *oeuvre* more generally, centers on the ideal of a "helpmeet" who ministers to her earthly family and the wider family of God's Church. The helpmeet defines herself not so much by duties performed as by the spirit in which she performs them, one of selflessness. The clever woman's eventual sacrifice of the studies she enjoys signals their approach to feminine womanliness through this spirit of self-forgetting, as Ethel May's progress in *The Daisy Chain* exemplifies.

## "[A]S GOOD FOR HOUSEHOLD MATTERS AS FOR BOOKS": MATURING INTO FEMININE WOMANHOOD IN *THE DAISY CHAIN*

*The Daisy Chain* (1856), Yonge's first novel to be called "a Family Chronicle," depicts "those years of . . . life when the character is chiefly formed" for the older children of the May family (vii).[45] Over the course of the novel, Richard grows from struggling Oxford undergraduate to parish priest; Margaret from mother's aid to paralyzed saint; Norman from schoolboy to missionary, and Ethel from scholarly dreamer to practical head of the household.[46] These years of character formation are also years of education, making, as Sturrock notes, *The Daisy Chain* "a novel immensely concerned with issues of gender and education" (*Heaven* 29). This section explores the novel's presentation of character formation through the lens of Ethel and her development into feminine womanhood. I read her progress from girl to woman, with its progress from classical scholarship to feminine "home usefulness" as explicitly dramatizing learning as incompatible with adult femininity (2.1.302).

*The Daisy Chain*'s narrative begins in the May schoolroom, where the older girls are at lessons with their daily governess, Miss Winter. The novel also devotes much attention to the May boys' schooling at the local grammar school. Not only does *The Daisy Chain* give space to the boys' mental and moral progress at school, but it also portrays Ethel, Margaret, Flora, and Mary as having interest in--and knowledge of--the

[45] The first volume of *The Daisy Chain* ran in *The Monthly Packet* from 1853 to 1855. The entire novel was published in two volumes by Mozley and Smith in 1856.

[46] This summary leaves out Ethel's older sister Flora, who marries an MP, and her next younger brother Harry, who enlists in the Navy. Mary, Tom, Blanche, Aubrey, and Gertrude May remain children in *The Daisy Chain.* Their maturation takes place in *The Trial: More Links in the Daisy Chain* (1864).

inner workings of their brothers' education. Ethel and Margaret, for example, demonstrate their mastery of the grammar school's terminology when they ask Norman, "[A]re you *dux* of your class?" and express regret that his verses are "not *optime*" (1.7.59). Mary ably identifies Harry's blotting paper because she recognizes the "anchor . . . Union Jack . . . [and] buttons" drawn upon them, making clear her familiarity with the apparatus of his studies, if not the substance (1.19.172). The sisters' detailed engagement with male education is compounded by the novel's casual use of academic terminology. For example, Dr. May attempts to ascertain the best pupil in Ethel's fledgling Sunday School at Cocksmoor by asking, "[W]ho is your senior wrangler?" (1.20.186), and the novel defines the "narrow red and white ribbon" with which Ethel stitches up Norman's entry for the Newdigate Prize as "--the Balliol colors--" almost as an afterthought (1.8.367). These references, along with the novel's copious literary and historical allusions, suppose, or even create, a similar knowledge and interest on the part of the novel's readers. By making the reader participate in this engagement with (particularly male) education, *The Daisy Chain* promotes its project of didactic identification. Yet though the novel condones the May sisters' monitoring of their brothers' learning, it upholds the differentiation of education by gender, and thus presents Ethel's efforts to follow Norman's studies as unsuitable for a young lady.

Ethel begins the novel in the schoolroom, but it soon becomes clear that her studies overflow that conventional setting. At age fifteen, Ethel's learning centers on daily lessons in history, modern languages, arithmetic, elocution, and the general knowledge typified by Miss Winter's examination: "What is the date of the invention of

paper? What are the latitude and longitude of Otaheite? What are the component parts of brass? Whence is cochineal imported?" (1.7.58). Outside the schoolroom, whose traditionally feminine lessons seem oppressive and useless to her, Ethel pursues a classical education. In *The Daisy Chain*'s first chapter she reads the New Testament in Greek and recites "with great emphasis an ode of Horace" (1.1.6). She orders her study by Norman's school assignments: every "Saturday he showed her what were his tasks for the week," and, using Richard's old textbooks, she makes great headway (1.1.7). A capable composer of Latin verse, Ethel can answer "all but one question" of the Oxford "examination paper he [Richard] broke down in" (1.3.20). Norman regularly asks her to check his Latin compositions for mistakes (1.8.69). Indeed, her verses even make an appearance at the grammar school when Norman accidentally brings Ethel's textbook with "so many rough copies of hers sticking in it" to school and his schoolmate "slyly copie[s] the whole set" (1.9.82). Harry's description of the copied verses as "done when she--Norman, I mean--was in the fifth form" positions Ethel as a grammar school student, registering the extent of her classical education (1.9.82).

Ethel displays not only an above-average aptitude for learning, but also an above-average ambition to gain it. At the opening of the novel it is "her great desire to be even with him [Norman] in all his studies" (1.1.6), and her great pride that, "though eleven months younger, she had never yet fallen behind him" (1.1.7). Harry's application of the grammar school nomenclature to Ethel's learning would likely please her as a mark of her success in keeping up with Norman. Yet Harry's narration of another schoolboy "show[ing] . . . up a girl's verses" also emphasizes the family's--and Ethel's own--sense

of her scholarship as unconventional and improper for a young woman. Harry's delight at the boy's mistake is matched only by his solicitude that Ethel's work not be identified as hers (1.9.82). "D'ye think I could tell?" he assures Margaret when she worries that Ethel will be found out, expressing his understanding of "Ethel's attainments as something contraband" (1.9.82). This perception of Ethel's scholarship as "something contraband" recurs throughout the novel. For example, when visiting the May home, Meta Rivers notices "a Greek book and dictionary" in the sisters' bedroom and learns that "Ethel would be much discomposed that I had seen them" (1.18.154). Ethel hides her Greek New Testament from her mother during prayers by "reading it within her English Bible" (1.1.6) and also attempts to keep her learning from her father: "Ethel would not, for the world, that anyone should guess that her classical studies--she scarcely liked to believe that even her father knew of them" (1.1.7). Ethel's, and the entire May family's, reluctance to openly countenance her classical education demonstrates the novel's vision of such female scholarship as opposed to properly female behavior, interests, and aims.

The novel's characterization of Ethel connects her ambitious education to her awkwardness and unfeminine appearance. A "thin, lank, angular, sallow girl" (1.1.1), Ethel's "marked features" are noted by family and acquaintance alike (2.1.300). The novel often contrasts her sharp, almost masculine appearance with those of her sisters, whom it describes as "pretty, fair" (1.1.1), or "fine, tall, blooming" (1.1.3). As Meta admits, "it was pleasanter to look at Flora" (1.20.189). Unlike her feminine sisters, Ethel bears a striking resemblance to her father, so that her face and height are "almost an exaggeration of the doctor's peculiarities" (1.2.11). Her inheritance of Dr. May's weak

eyesight adds to their likeness and her unladylikeness, for she wears an old pair of his glasses until her siblings mount a protest against them because they make her an object of ridicule.[47]

In addition to her glasses, Ethel's carelessness about her appearance heightens the unfeminine air her features give her. Frequently berated for her rumpled dress, mussed hair, muddy boots, and disordered work basket, Ethel is constantly crumpling things. The novel depicts her "crumpling her work into a bundle" (1.3.18) when packing clothes to take to Cocksmoor, and "crumpling the black folds" of her dress in an attempt to pin up her skirts (1.6.53). The act of crumpling connotes haste and displeasure as much as carelessness, and her family nickname, "Etheldred the Unready," speaks to this habit of putting off home duties and daily tasks until the last moment or rushing through them (1.3.17). Moreover, *The Daisy Chain* associates Ethel's intellectual pursuits with her harried toilette and general heedlessness of feminine refinement and the domestic, charitable works of middle-class women. For example, she keeps her "work basket in rare disorder" (1.1.6) because she does her mending "while meantime . . . spout[ing] with great emphasis an ode of Horace" (1.1.6). She keeps others waiting for a walk because "I had such a capital line in my head, I was forced to write it down" (1.3.18) but needs Norman to tell her "the past participle of *offero*" before she can finish it (1.3.17).

[47] Ethel's myopia, which Schaub reads as "a direct bodily manifestation of a woman's restricted role" (66) and a symbol of the incompatibility of Ethel's intellectual ambition with feminine domesticity, functions similarly to the temporary, teenage disability that Hale identifies with "the coming of age of talented adolescent girls" (343-44). Though Ethel's shortsightedness does not approach Cherry Underwood's lame foot or Katy Carr's broken spine, it does mirror these girls' temporary disability in that it too "forces them to control their bodies, emotions, and talents and to become models of idealized womanhood" while also suggesting "the ambiguities of transition from girlhood to womanhood" (344).

Tellingly, Ethel attributes her heedlessness of feminine tasks to a lack of theoretical understanding. When an exasperated Richard instructs her in pinning her skirts, she tells him that it is "the third thing you have taught me--to thread a needle, tie a bow, and stick in a pin. I never could learn those things of anyone else; they show but don't explain the theory" (1.6.52). Similarly, when he teaches her to serve tea, Ethel exclaims that "it makes one hotter than double equations!" (1.8.69). Ethel's inability to thread a needle or stick a pin without "theory," as well as her generally unladylike appearance and behavior, suggest that her interest in classical and higher learning forecloses attention to the proper domestic and personal cares of a young woman.

The novel more explicitly connects Ethel's shortcomings to her educational pursuits through scenes in which she fails to fulfill familial or domestic obligations. Two examples stand out particularly, in which Dr. May specifically invokes Ethel's classical studies as the cause of her failure. First, when she hurts the paralyzed Margaret by trying to move her, Dr. May blames her interest in learning, crying, "Ethel will give no attention to anything but her books! I have a great mind to put an end to all the Latin and Greek! She cares for nothing else" (1.7.62). He later apologizes, but the imputation that Ethel's education detracts from her household usefulness--skills all the more needed after her mother's death and Margaret's laming--remains unchallenged. Indeed, this charge, and the attendant threat of forbidding her study, resurfaces when Ethel, absorbed in her reading, fails to save her brother Aubrey from catching a paper boat and himself on fire. Again Dr. May intervenes, and again he again attributes her inattention and inability to her study: "[D]idn't see! Didn't look, didn't think, didn't care! That's it Ethel . . . . I'll put

a stop to all schools and Greek, if it is to lead to this and make you good for nothing" (1.14.122-23). Dr. May's prediction that classical learning will make Ethel "good for nothing" is crucial to the novel's articulation of education's relationship to proper femininity, for it stresses the lack of applicability of classical learning to a middle-class woman's life and duties. The education Ethel pursues does not teach her to nurse her sister, mind her younger siblings, or even to perform basic domestic tasks, such as keeping things orderly, mending clothing, or serving tea. By making her "good for nothing" at home, and in fact distracting her from "home usefulness," Ethel's advanced education proves antithetical to her developing femininity (2.1.302).

This concept of education making Ethel "good for nothing" recurs when Ethel is called to put aside her classical studies for good. As Margaret sinks into invalidism and Flora becomes the family's representative in local society, Ethel finds herself increasingly taxed with home responsibilities. Her initial attempts to balance her studies, her work for Cocksmoor, and her duties at home, leave little time for the "little common ladylike things" (1.18.163). Miss Winter complains of Ethel's "hurried, careless way of doing everything, and . . . . irritability at being interfered with," insisting that such overwork "is hurtful to a girl of her age" (1.18.159). Less concerned with harm to Ethel's body or mind than with damage to her femininity, Miss Winter brands Ethel's study and philanthropy as "beyond what befits a young lady of her age" (1.18.59). She predicts that, if not checked, Ethel will "grow up odd, eccentric, and blue" (1.18.160). Goaded by Miss Winter's complaints, Margaret gently suggests that Ethel give up her classical studies, reminding her, "[Y]ou did pretty well when you began [trying to be more useful and

ladylike], but you know that was in the holidays, when you had no Latin and Greek to do" (1.18.162). When Ethel protests that Latin and Greek "won't take so much of my time when I have once got over the difficulties" of a new, "frightfully difficult play," Margaret asserts the unsuitability of Ethel's continued scholarship on two fronts (1.18.162). First, she points out that while Norman's schoolwork is "his whole business of the day," Ethel has "Cocksmoor to attend to" in addition to her own lessons (1.18.162). Margaret contends that what is Norman's "business" is not Ethel's, and that making Norman's studies her "business" distracts Ethel from her proper concerns. Second, Margaret calls into question Ethel's ability for continued classical study by noting that "Norman was telling papa the other day that it was very odd that Dr. Hoxton gave them such easy lessons" (1.18.162). Ethel is "very much mortified" by this comment, for it suggests that her increased difficulty keeping up with Norman is the result not of her busy schedule but of her inherent, feminine inferiority (1.18.162). Margaret's reflection that "we all know that men have more power than women and I suppose the time has come for Norman to pass beyond you" leaves no room for misinterpretation (1.18.162-63).

Differences between male and female "power" aside, the argument for Ethel leaving off her classical study is, at its heart, one of applicability, not ability. Margaret projects the outcome of Ethel's continuing "to do as Norman does," concluding with the question of use value: "[I]f you could get all the honors in the University--what would it come to? You can't take a first class" (1.18.163). Whereas Norman's taking a first-class opens doors to a career, Ethel's taking a first is both impossible and useless, as it would

bring no occupational advantages. Margaret contrasts the uselessness of Ethel's continued study with the opportunity for "being a useful, steady daughter at home . . . . the sort of woman that dear mama wished to make you, and a comfort to papa" (1.18.163).[48] Norman seconds Margaret's (and the novel's) view of Ethel's classical education as opposed to useful femininity. He approves her resolution to spend less time on Greek and Latin, assuring her that "it is really time for you to stop, or you would get into a regular learned lady, and be good for nothing" (1.18.164). Again, the novel associates Ethel's scholarship with being useless--"good for nothing"--and Norman crucially explains why: "I don't mean that knowing more than other people would make you so, but minding nothing else would" (1.18.164). The lesson is clear. Ethel's determination to have the same education as Norman keeps her from thinking of and performing the duties that will make her a good, useful woman.

Further indicating the mutually exclusive relationship between classical study and useful femininity, Margaret balks at Ethel's scheme of continuing her classical study instead of her daily lessons. Margaret again invokes their mother, the novel's ideal of femininity, saying, "I don't think dear mama would have liked Greek and Cocksmoor to swallow up all the little common ladylike things" (1.18.163). Mrs. May serves as the novel's model of the helpmeet, the truly feminine woman, against whom characters (and readers) can measure their current behavior and towards whom they can strive. Margaret's recourse to Mrs. May's memory exhibits her power as an example for her

[48] Schaub, who considers Ethel to be subject to "domestic imprisonment" (73), reads this scene as exemplifying "the ruthless way sentiment is used to compel Ethel to her female role" in the novel (76).

daughters. Mrs. May's example and wishes for her children guide Ethel toward "being a useful, steady daughter and sister at home . . . the sort of woman that dear mama wished to make you" (1.18.163). As with Margaret's recollection of the significance of "little common ladylike things" to their mother, this statement defines home usefulness, particularly service to parents and siblings, as the paramount factor in becoming the right "sort of woman."

Ethel, in her aspiration to be the "right sort of woman," like her mother, agrees to "give up the verse making and the trying to do as much as Norman," and contents herself with half an hour of Greek a day (1.18.163). By doing so, Ethel transforms her classical education from a "business" (as it is for Norman) to a hobby. She is no longer a masculine scholar but a ladylike amateur, who studies Greek as a recreation from her real work in the home. Ethel herself acknowledges this difference between Norman's duties and her own at this turning point. "I was just going to say I hated being a woman," she admits, "and having these tiresome little trifles--my duty--instead of learning, which is yours, Norman" (1.18.164). Though she still sees her feminine duties as "tiresome . . . trifles," Ethel acknowledges that classical learning does not enter into her duty as it does for Norman.[49]

This series of exchanges, between Miss Winter and Margaret, Margaret and Ethel, and Ethel and Norman, which occur over the course of a single chapter, encapsulates *The*

[49] The novel does not apply this association of classics with their use-value in leading to a career exclusively to women. See, for example, Harry's articulation of his career aspirations: "I had rather be a sailor. I don't wish to get away from Latin and Greek, I don't mind them: but I think I could be a better sailor than anything" (1.9.85).

*Daisy Chain*'s depiction of female education and intellectualism. They establish a thorough classical education as antithetical to the home usefulness that the novel identifies with womanhood. Such learning makes a girl "good for nothing" because it neither teaches her the skills nor leaves her the time and interest for ministering to family. Additionally, these conversations indicate that extensive study may be damaging to Ethel's body and mind, as well as her femininity. Miss Winter, for example, predicts that Ethel "may not feel any ill effects at present, but you may depend upon it, it will tell on her by and by" (1.18.159). Dr. May's medical expertise confirms Miss Winter's opinion. "Surprised to hear that Ethel had kept up so long with Norman," he counsels Margaret that "it would be hurtful to body as well as mind" for Ethel to continue to add Norman's learning to her proper studies and charitable work (1.18.164). These concerns about the effects of overwork on Ethel's body and mind express contemporary anxieties about the mind's influence on the body and *vice versa*, often aligned with the closed energy theory of bodily processes.[50] *The Daisy Chain*, while ascribing the ill effects of mental strain to both male and female scholars, associates such damage with damage to gender. For example, Dr. May scolds Norman for bringing himself to the brink of another breakdown by telling him, "[I]it is rendering you unmanly" (1.29.287).[51] Similarly, Flora's prolonged hysterics at her infant's death puts her "brain--nay her life" at risk and renders her

[50] See, for example, Spencer's articulation of this theory in *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (1860) discussed in chapter one.

[51] Norman repeatedly suffers from the strain of his education. For example, after an examination, Norman collapses, "his whole system disordered" (1.11.99). Dr. May finds that "if we had wanted to occasion brain fever we could have not gone a better way to set about it" and worries that Norman's "health and nerves [will be] damaged for life" (1.11.99). Norman suffers a number of breakdowns, including one at Oxford, and chooses his career as a missionary in part to avoid damaging his health and nerves further.

uninterested in her home duties and in her next child (1.20.507). By associating mental disorder with bodily and gender disorder, *The Daisy Chain* affirms contemporary understandings of the brain's ability to affect bodily processes, thus ratifying the types of medico-scientific theories that oppose scholarship to femininity.

Yet Ethel's protests against giving up her Greek and Latin contain an element of femininity, for they present her advanced learning as a function of her love for her brother. She depicts her study as a labor of love, crying, "we have hardly missed doing the same every day since the first Latin grammar was put into his hands! . . . from *hic hoec hoc* up to Alcaics and *beta* Thukididou we have gone on together" (1.18.162). When she declares, "I can't bear to give it up," it is unclear whether she means the lessons or the companionship they fostered (1.18.162). Ethel's portrayal of her classical studies as maker and marker of her close relationship with Norman positions her tenacious efforts to keep up with him as a sign of sisterly love. This insistence on her study of Latin and Greek as begun by Norman and continued as a means of retaining his brotherly affection works to reclassify Ethel's learning. In this view, it is not the enthusiasm of an unfeminine woman but an example of the feminine adaption to the interests of loved ones (particularly men) frequently preached in mid-Victorian disquisitions on women's roles and purpose.[52] Yonge's *Womankind* suggests that sympathy of knowledge and pursuits as particularly necessary for sisters of brothers, recommending that readers "stretch your

[52] See, for example, Ruskin's "Of Queens' Gardens" on women's knowledge as primarily to enable her "to sympathize in her husband's [or, I would add, father's or brother's] pleasures, and in those of his best friends" (111). *Womankind* articulates a similar stance, alleging that "women lose all the power they might have in dealing with the men of their families . . . if they cannot understand or sympathize with brother, husband, or son" (11.83).

endurance and sympathy to the utmost rather than lose your brother's heart" because "a sister can do much . . . if she has his thorough love and trust, and can sympathize with him heartily" (18.137). This construction of Ethel's scholarship as, at heart, an act of sisterly companionship thus softens its masculine, transgressive edge and situates it as part of the home interests that it threatened to undermine.

However, Ethel's reluctant renunciation foregrounds a valence of her learning that unsettles any vision of it as fostering proper femininity: her ambition. Though "Ethel would not, for the world, that anyone should guess at her classical studies" (1.1.7), her tenacity in clinging to them indicates a sense of pride in her abilities, as does "her great desire" of equaling Norman's scholarly progress (1.1.6). Tellingly, she feels a sting of pride at his assessment that "if you find those verses too hard, and that they take up too much of your time, you had better give them up" (1.18.163) because she does "not like anything to be said to be too hard for her" (1.18.164). Yet Ethel soon recognizes the danger of this reaction: "I suppose it is a wrong sort of ambition to want to learn more, in one's own way, when one is told it is not good for one" (1.18.164). Ethel's acceptance that "her eagerness for classical learning was a wrong sort of ambition, to know what other girls did not . . . to crave for more knowledge than was thought advisable for her" correlates strongly with contemporary anxieties about classical, liberal education's effects on female minds and interests (1.18.164).

Ethel's ambition leads to her neglect of, or lack of interest in, feminine tasks like personal grooming and minding her siblings, as well as to potential harm to her female mind and body through overwork. Though *The Daisy Chain* presents Ethel's ambitious,

unfeminine learning as potentially dangerous to herself (through overwork or a failure to achieve ladylikeness) and to her family (recall Aubrey's setting himself on fire), it ultimately defines her interest in scholarship as a stage to go through or a habit to break. The construction of Ethel's enthusiasm for knowledge as "ambition" connects it to Mrs. May's final warning against "wanting to be first more than wanting to do one's best" (1.1.6) and the novel's subtitle, "Aspirations." By casting her classical scholarship as ambition or aspiration, which is "part of every youthful nature" during "those years of early life when the character is chiefly formed," *The Daisy Chain* suggests that Ethel's intellectual ambition constitutes a stage in her development, one she must pass through before she can reach feminine womanhood (vii).

Ethel's acknowledgment of her intellectual ambition as "the wrong sort" and her resolution to subordinate her learning "to papa first, and, secondly, to Cocksmoor" inaugurates her development from girl to woman (1.18.164). This maturation serves as a key narrative for *The Daisy Chain*'s mission as a family chronicle: for the rest of the novel, readers watch and learn from Ethel's struggles to become "a useful, steady daughter and sister at home" (1.18.163). And struggle she does. Yet the novel insists that Ethel's intellectual bent can be put to use in her dispatch of female duties. Richard, in many ways the family's mother figure, makes this connection between learning and doing in an attempt to inspire Ethel's management of household tasks and family matters. He depicts her intellect as suited to her domestic tasks, just as it to her lessons, explaining to her that "you are much sharper than most people; and if you tried, you would know how to do those things as much better than I do, as you know how to learn history"

(1.8.68). Ethel gradually proves Richard right, and as her abilities grow, so does her influence at home. Soon she polices her study, eventually "call[ing] . . . on herself to sacrifice her studies and her regularity as far as was needful, to make herself available for home requirements" (2.1.308-09).

As she develops away from scholarship towards home usefulness, Ethel gains self-knowledge: her refusal to write a set of Latin verses with Norman expresses her understanding that this type of intellectual work is damaging--or at least antithetical--to her new position. She admits to Norman that "if I throw myself into it, I shall hate everything else, and my wits will be wool-gathering," portraying academic study as capable of making discontented with the daily tasks and responsibilities for which she gave up verse-making (2.5.343). Again, Ethel polices her own feminine usefulness, reinforcing the novel's definition of classical education as distracting her from her proper concerns. Ethel also acknowledges the lack of use value that makes Latin and Greek unsuitable for her in her description of her wits as "wool-gathering," that is, indulging in "wandering fantasies or purposeless thinking" ("Wool-gathering"). She further distances verse-making and classics from her feminine usefulness by admitting that she gave them up "because I had other fish to fry" and that though she does "scrabble down things that tease me . . . when I want to clear my brains . . . I can't do it without sitting up at night, and that stupefies me before breakfast" (2.5.343). Ethel's ultimate acceptance of extended liberal education as unfeminine, illustrated in her policing of her study, represents her progress towards womanhood, thus solidifying *The Daisy Chain*'s depiction of scholarship and femininity as incompatible. After her renunciation of Latin and Greek in

favor of home and Church duties, Ethel serves as a model of how a scholarly girl can make herself into a feminine woman, showing readers that "though family and community responsibilities must be privileged over intellectual interests" ("'Inferiority'" 61), their mental "powers [are] as good for household matters as for books" (2.5.358). In doing so, Ethel also models the importance of self-sacrifice for young women ambitious to be the useful, steady young woman at home.

*The Daisy Chain* foregrounds the sacrifices Ethel makes to her vow of usefulness to her father and to the growing church community at Cocksmoor, beginning with keeping up with Norman and ending with the majority of her unscheduled time. Her *nota bene* to her weekly schedule exemplifies the self-sacrifice *The Daisy Chain* associates with feminine home usefulness: "*Musts*--to be first consulted. *Mays*--last. Ethel May's last of all. If I cannot do everything--omit the self-chosen" (2.7.364). Such self-sacrifice is the hallmark of true womanhood for the novel and the antithesis of the "crav[ing] for more knowledge" that characterizes Ethel's ambitious education (1.18.164). By putting her remarkable energy, ability to learn, and ambitions into the proper channels (family and Cocksmoor), Ethel develops into a model young lady. Though her increase in femininity does little to soften her sharp, masculine features, Ethel fulfills Harry's prophecy that "Cocksmoor will make a woman out of her" (2.24.560). Her mission to Cocksmoor necessitates the first sacrifice of her studies to ladylike concerns, paving the way for the later renunciation of academic work that, along with a flirtation during her visit to Oxford, enables her to end the novel firmly feminine, not only a "daughter and sister at home" but also "truly a mother to the younger ones" and, arguably, a wife to her

father (2.29.593).[53] By giving up her scholarly ambitions to fulfill domestic and familial needs, Ethel gains the pinnacle of femininity, the "value and importance at home which comes of the laying aside of all self-importance" (2.29.593). *The Daisy Chain* additionally rewards her through the fulfillment of "the visions of her girlhood, when she had first dreamt of a church at Cocksmoor" (2.29.593). Ethel's "intense thanksgiving that the work has been taken out of her hands" (2.29.593) at the church's consecration completes, for Sturrock, the novel's vision of womanly self-effacement that "demands that Ethel should be rewarded and that she should be unconscious of her desserts" because "if ambition is to be acceptable it must not be directed towards the self" (*Heaven* 43). I hold that Ethel's development into the role of the woman of the house and visionary philanthropist clearly necessitates the setting-aside of her academic interests and ambitions. Indeed, through the fulfillment of Ethel's greatest aspirations, to build a church at Cocksmoor and to aid her father, only after she renounces her classical (and, eventually, the vast majority of her other) studies, *The Daisy Chain* presents advanced learning as a roadblock to cultivating proper femininity and finding true fulfillment.

[53] There for Norman's Newdigate Prize poem reading, Ethel meets Norman Ogilivy, a distant cousin. A mutual attraction develops. However, Ethel has "mentally vowed never to forsake her father," knowing that "for years to come she should be necessary at home," and she leaves Oxford early in order to avoid temptation and to "preserve her heart for him" (2.9.386). Though Ethel flees from this potential relationship, the novel later refers to it as "that which had awakened the feminine element and removed that sense of not being like other women," crediting it with a "certain softening and a degree more attention to her appearance" (2.13.436).

## "PROVING THE 'VERY WOMANHOOD' OF HIS CLEVER WOMAN": RE-EDUCATING THE LEARNED LADY IN *THE CLEVER WOMAN OF THE FAMILY*

If *The Daisy Chain* dramatizes Ethel's slow maturation into home-useful femininity to illustrate the antipathy between scholarship and femininity, then *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865)[54] suggests what Ethel would have grown into had "home and Cocksmoor" (*Daisy* 2.29.593) not led her away from her early intellectual ambitions. Sturrock summarizes the similarities and differences between the two novels thus: "*The Daisy Chain* . . . is full of implied or asserted distinctions between the feminine and masculine . . . and the sincerely and falsely feminine [while] *The Clever Woman of the Family* can be read as a protracted investigation of the properly feminine intellect and its appropriate employment" (*Heaven* 26). This comparison rightly, I believe, suggests that the main distinction between the novels is between finding femininity and using it. Whereas *The Daisy Chain* illustrates the progress from girl to woman (and its attendant progress from scholarship to femininity), *The Clever Woman* dramatizes the consequences of a woman who does not progress away from intellectual pursuits and ambition in girlhood. Indeed, Rachel Curtis is called all the epithets the May family worries will be applied to Ethel, such as "odd, eccentric" (*Clever* 7.176, 1.42), "clever" (*Clever* 7.176), and "strong-minded" (*Clever* 13.274). This section's reading of *The Clever Woman* argues that Rachel illustrates the novel's perception of the mutual exclusivity between "intellectuality" (the term Rachel's future husband, Capt. Alick Keith, uses to describe her most prominent characteristic) and femininity (30.547).

[54] Published in two volumes by Macmillan. Coleridge notes that "some people think it is the cleverest of Miss Yonge's books, but there is a controversial element in it, which I think, detracts from its charms" (230). Sturrock calls it "Charlotte Yonge's *Emma*" (*Heaven* 61).

Instead of a narrative of development, such as Ethel's in *The Daisy Chain*, Rachel's is a narrative of failed ambitions, humbled pride, and new learning. Ultimately, my reading of Rachel's progress depicts the novel as suggesting that the clever woman must undergo re-education (or, perhaps, a de-education) in order to become a happy, socially productive, feminine woman.

Rachel begins the novel at "the close of young-ladyhood," on her twenty-fifth birthday (*Clever* 1.35). As an adult woman, she embodies the contemporary concern that excessive attention to study and intellectual matters make a woman unfeminine. This lack of femininity manifests physically. Especially in contrast to her cousin Fanny's "soft, clear olive skin; delicate, oval face, and pretty deep brown eyes with . . . imploring, earnest sweetness" (1.44), and her aptly named sister, Grace, Rachel's "features of an irregular, characteristic cast, brow low and broad, nose rétroussé . . . eyes widely opened, dark deep gray and decidedly prominent" seem masculine, if not degenerative (1.36). For her part, Rachel imagines her appearance as "repellently practical and intellectual" (7.179) and hopes that her external appearance betokens her inner determination not to be "diverted from a great purpose by a courtship like any ordinary woman" (10.242).

Rachel's appearance does much to mark her as unfeminine, but, as her above consideration of her appearance suggests, her lack of social and personal graces truly indicate her lack of womanliness. With those she likes or for whom she feels responsible, Rachel is "domineering" (7.167) and, "when excited or interested, most people [find] . . . her oppressive" (3.96). To those whom she does not esteem, Rachel is "cold" and "severe" (1.49). Her manner of speaking is frequently depicted as "blunt" (4.107, 4.111,

7.164), and "usually too eager to be observant," she often misapprehends or completely ignores polite signals of weariness with her conversation (5.127). While Rachel's lack of tact and domineering attitude do not necessarily connote masculinity, neither do they display the femininity exemplified by Fanny's "innocent, soft, helpless dignity" (14.287) and her "subdued, gentle" manner (3.99) or by Ermine Williams's (the novel's epitome of true clever womanhood) use of her intellect toward "helping the spirits in infirmity and trouble . . . [and] winning love and influence for good" (29.547). Rachel's "manful" personal characteristics display the rejection of proper femininity instigated by her intellectual and progressive interests (23.416).

Rachel has "had the palm of cleverness conceded to her ever since she could remember," and, as a girl, "had enjoyed, and excelled in the studies that were a toil" to other girls (1.41). As a young woman, Rachel's intellectual enthusiasm extended beyond the schoolroom, so she undertook a "process of self-education . . . and carried on her favorite studies . . . until she considerably surpassed in acquirements and reflection all the persons with whom she came in frequent contact" (1.41-42). Her town of Avonmouth, "little connected with the great progressive world," chafes Rachel, and she withdraws from intellectual "conversation or commerce with living minds" to instead feed her sympathies and interests on periodicals (1.42). "Isolated as a sort of pedant" (1.42) and always deferred to by her mother and sister, Rachel develops both a keen sense of superiority and the desire for a "mission" (1.38). Rachel rejects what she calls "the ordinary course of unambitious feminine life" as offering too narrow a scope for a woman's interests and actions and yearns to rebel against her upper-middle-class

femininity, which she feels keeps her "tethered down to the merest mockery of usefulness by conventionality . . . a young lady forsooth!" (1.38).

Additionally, her interest in the topics discussed in the progressive periodicals she favors, such as worker's and women's rights, magnifies her sense of personal confinement, leading her to eschew conventional femininity and marriage. Moreover, she comes to believe that all women (should) suffer from the restrictions of conventionality as she does. For example, she considers Bessie Keith's marriage evidence of typical feminine weakness, noting that despite all Bessie's "capabilities . . . womanhood was at the root all the time" and further construes the marriage as proof that "aspirations in women are mere delusions" because "no mental power or acuteness has, in any instance that I have seen, been able to balance the propensity to bondage" (16.301). Beyond voicing such opinions to her immediate circle, Rachel plans to gain influence, if not fame, through their dissemination in the periodical press. One of her early fantasies sees her as the celebrated authoress of a series of articles "exposing the fallacies of woman's life as at present conducted," which will garner her praise and liberate womankind (3.105). Rachel's vision of herself as authoress-for-women's-rights here highlights the novel's consistent association of her rejection of femininity with her reading and learning.

Not only the novel but also Rachel herself positions her intellectual interests as the cause of her contempt for femininity. Looking back upon her young adulthood at the end of the novel, Rachel admits, "I had a few intellectual tastes, and liked to think and read, which was supposed to be cleverness; and my willfulness made me fancy myself

superior" (30.547). She also connects her cleverness, thinking, and reading to her refusal of conventional womanhood, confessing that it was her reading and studies which taught her to rate "ordinary opinions so contemptible" and "marriage such ordinary drudgery" (23.430). Both Rachel and the novel blame her "intellectual tastes" for her lack of femininity, but the novel blames those intellectual tastes, and Rachel's consequent sense of superiority, on her lack of a proper guide for her learning. Because she is her father's "spoiled pet" (22.412), "the subject of her [mother's] pride, even when an enigma and an anxiety," and better read than the majority of her neighbors, Rachel develops a skewed vision of herself and the world (22.413).

Col. Keith's apt--if harsh--description of Rachel as "a detestable, pragmatical, domineering girl" who disputes him "with principles picked up from every catch-penny periodical, things she does not half understand, and enunciates as if no one had even heard of them before," perfectly captures Rachel's *modus operandi,* presenting her combative, superior attitude as the product of her isolated and isolating, haphazard self-education (7.167). Ermine's response illuminates the root cause of Rachel's unpleasantness as this lack of regulation: "I believe that all that is unpleasing in her arises from her being considered the clever woman of the family; having no man nearly connected enough to keep her in check, and living in a society that does not fairly meet her" (7.168). Mrs. Curtis also attributes Rachel's unpleasantness--and her cleverness--to her lack of male regulator. Though in the mother's case it takes the form of the wish to marry Rachel off: "so clever and odd as she is, and with such peculiar ideas, I should be so thankful to see her in the hands of some good, sensible man that would guide her"

(7.176). These two visions of Rachel as unchecked and thus unpleasant (or, at least, odd) express the novel's assertion of the need for steady, sensible men to guide and check their wives, daughters, and sisters, and also indicate the extent to which Rachel's lack of such an influence contributes to her rejection of conventional womanliness.

*The Clever Woman* further attributes Rachel's progressive opinions and aggressive behavior to her unchallenged interpretations of what she reads and learns. The novel presents Rachel's lack of outside discussion of her learning partly as a function of the texts themselves, as in its reference to "some of the books over which Rachel had strained her capacities without finding anyone with whom to discuss them, since all her friends regarded them as poisonous" (7.174). No one in Rachel's circle is willing to read these "poisonous" texts, leaving her to interpret them as she can, while the characterization of Rachel's reading as effort that "strain[s] . . . her capacities" indicates the danger of this unchecked study. Endangered here are not only her physical or mental "capacities," but also her moral and religious beliefs, for, in her auto-didactic consideration of contemporary issues, "she had never thought that justice was done to the argument except by a portion of the press, that drew conclusions that terrified while they allured her" (7.174). Therefore, her acquaintance with Col. Keith, who likes "to talk and argue out his impressions" of these issues and texts, serves as a salutary, if not salvific, influence. Col. Keith's "candor . . . [in] distinguishing principle from prejudice, and religious faith from conventional construction" proves the proper antidote to Rachel's self-willed, self-guided interpretations, allowing her to for "the first time hear . . . the subjects fairly handled" (7.174).

Rachel comes to recognize the danger of her cleverness and "self-sufficiency" through the disastrous and very public failure of the industrial school and reform society she has built from her progressive ideas (23.420). Her subsequent re-education typifies the novel's vision of proper femininity as guided by (male) family.[55] As the danger Rachel poses to herself and to her community stems from her sense of mental and moral superiority that rejects the authority of family and clergy, so does her re-education involve humbling her sense of cleverness and turning her to home and family usefulness in the context of a male-centered family. After the failure of her school and the legal trial against Mauleverer, Rachel contracts diphtheria from one of the students. Her slow convalescence affords her time to contemplate her mistakes and to realize she has fallen in love with Alick Keith. They marry and complete their honeymoon (and Rachel's convalescence) at the home of Alick's uncle, Mr. Claire. Mr. Claire had served as young Alick's guardian and nursed him after he returned, injured, from a deployment to India. In his turn, Alick cared for his uncle during his descent into blindness. In this reading of Rachel's evolution into feminine womanhood as an education, her humiliation and illness function to disabuse Rachel--and the reader--of belief in an individual's ability to create positive change, not, as Sturrock and others have claimed, as to ensure that "Rachel is heartily punished for her crimes against femininity" (*Heaven* 62). Reform and aid must come from a like-minded, united community, not from the isolated, domineering individual, as the multi-vocal, epistolary chapter that narrates the communal effort to

[55] In calling it an education, I am here following Col. Keith's half-jesting suggestion that Alick has made ridicule "a part of her education" (30.544). Wagner calls it a "conversion" ("Led" 312) and Sturrock a "punishment" (62).

convict the con-man Mauleverer/Maddox suggests. Rachel's convalescence and re-education therefore operate to teach her to "put aside excessive individualism in favor of community" as Elizabeth Hale suggests of other cases of temporary female disability in Yonge's novels (347).[56]

As Rachel completes her physical recovery, she enters into a re-education that teaches her womanly subordination to the familial community. She begins by setting aside her opinions on the "empty employment" (24.442) of novel reading and the "young-ladyism" of piano playing when she learns that Mr. Claire enjoys both but is rarely able to experience either as a blind, widower parson (24.443). Rachel resolves to "recover music enough to please him," even though it means admitting that although she learned to play piano "like other people, it was the only thing I could not do as well as Grace" (24.443). Her dedication to "an hour's practice every day" marks Rachel's increasing approach to feminine usefulness, and so earns the novel's approbation as "a wholesome purpose even as regarded her health and spirit" (24.444). Familial service improves her well-being as well as her wifeliness.

Rachel's next attempt at service humbles her intellectual pretensions as much as subordinates her to the community by revealing Alick's and Clare's superior learning. Mr. Claire and Alick have been looking up a psalm for Claire's sermon, "quoting it in Greek as well as in English and . . . Hebrew," and when Claire needs a reference to

[56] This interlude of disability in many ways parallels the disabilities suffered by talented, energetic young women explored by Hale. For, like the temporary disability Hale identifies in Cherry Underwood and Katy Carr, Rachel's convalescence "brings into focus the essential dilemma of what to do with a . . . mind in a female body--suppressing the latter in order to train the former into productive avenues" (347).

Augustine, Rachel can "not be satisfied without a flight at the original" (24.444). However, Claire is "obliged to get Alick to read the passage over to him before he arrived at the sense," leaving Rachel to feel that "her flight of clever womanhood had fallen short" (24.445). This failed attempt at scholarly service humbles Rachel through her failure to parse the text, challenging her self-conception as learned. More importantly, it challenges her motives for learning. Surprised at Alick's knowledge of Hebrew, Rachel is "abashed" at his explanation that he "learned enough . . . to look out my uncle's texts for him" because it diminishes her interest in Hebrew as a means of allowing her to "appreciate the disputed passages" (24.444). The transgressive valence of Rachel's learning, with its interest in "poisonous" and "disputed" ideas, contrasts unfavorably with Alick's learning for home usefulness and reverent scholarship. In fact, both men's scholarship centers on community service. Mr. Claire, a former Oxford tutor, belongs "to the generation which gave its choicest in intellectual, as well as in religious gifts to the ministry" (24.454), and Alick uses his position as captain in his Highland Regiment to improve its "library and the regimental school" (8.201). Claire and Alick model for Rachel both true cleverness as well as the true goal of such learning in their application of scholarly talent to the service of their communities, not to self-aggrandizing "missions."

With her husband and his uncle, then, Rachel is for the first time "living with people who read more of, and deeper into, everything than she" (24.454). She begins to understand "how shallow were her acquirements, how inaccurate her knowledge, how devoid of force and validity her reasonings," in the face of these men's almost offhand intellectuality. This sense of herself as "the dullest and most ignorant person present,"

combined with the love that engenders her usefulness, performs much of Rachel's re-education (24.455). And though "here and there a spark of the old conceit" (24.455) draws her into intellectual or progressive pretensions, Rachel soon abandons them to a "round of duties . . . details of parish work, walking with, writing for, and reading to Mr. Claire" (28.505). Her position as Claire's handmaid enables Rachel to "benefit from intercourse with such a mind" by teaching her to rate her cleverness accurately and to acknowledge and defer to the judgment of another (28.505). Her increasing usefulness to her new family and her increasing pleasure in that usefulness mark the progress of her re-education into feminine womanhood.

Rachel's recovery of religious faith likewise signals her progress towards femininity because it represents a triumph of authority and tradition over her intellectuality and "self-sufficiency" (23.428). Reading through her old books and articles with Claire, Rachel finally has an expert to guide her understanding and interpretation, someone who can show her "the real principles and bearings of the controversy" (28.505). Her tuition under Claire reveals the danger of her previous lack of a male guide, indicating that "many of her errors had chiefly arisen from the want of someone whose superiority she could feel, and her old presumptions withered up to nothing when she measured her own powers with those of highly educated man" (28.505). Rachel's enlightenment--as regards this religious controversy and her inferior mental powers--serves as evidence that "a woman's tone of thought is commonly moulded by the masculine intellect, which, under one form or another, becomes the master of her soul" (28.506). Because she lacked a superior mind to guide her studies and mold her beliefs,

Rachel had fallen prey to "the more feeble and distant power" of written arguments and opinions that insidiously "appeared to her the light of her independent mind" (28.506). Her re-education thus confirms both her need for male guidance and the danger of female intellectual ambition and self-sufficiency. Rachel's conversion and re-education restore "the nature of things" by bringing her back into the Anglican faith as well as by emphasizing her subordination to family and community (28.506).

Rachel's return to the Church functions both as a cause and an effect of her growing womanliness. By the end of her honeymoon in Bishopsworthy, Rachel's progress in femininity manifests in the clearing up of her religious doubts and her useful, ladylike service to Claire and his parish, especially the visiting and piano playing she disdained as a clever woman. Her progress also shows in her altered appearance and interests. For example, Bessie observes that "her face is softer, and her eyes more veiled, and her chin not so cocked up," concluding that "she looks better and nicer than I ever saw her" (25.457). Similarly, Col. Keith, not one to give Rachel undue credit, admits that she is "showing to great advantage" in her devotion to Claire and Alick (29.525). Rachel's more feminine features and self-presentation coincide with her adoption of the quintessential womanly role: childcare. She becomes the primary caretaker of Bessie's infant son Alexander, and this "special charge" effects the full conversion of her scholarly and superior rejection of femininity (28.506). Though she "studies . . . all the books on infant management that she could obtain," Rachel tempers her isolated reading by reaching out to her community, filling "her letters to her mother with questions and details" about the baby's health (28.507). Rachel's assiduous care of and great fondness

for young Alexander becomes, at least for Alick, a means of "proving the 'very womanhood' of his Clever Woman" (28.517). This "very womanhood," expressed in her devotion to the infant, bespeaks the success of Rachel's re-education. Rachel herself speaks to its success when she acknowledges that as "an ordinary married woman" (28.516) she is "of far more positive use in the world . . . than ever she had been in her most assuming maiden days" (28.517). *The Clever Woman* demonstrates that Rachel achieves her goal of a mission--"positive use in the world"--only when she abandons her intellectually fed self-sufficiency and embraces "the ordinary course of unambitious feminine life" (1.41).

Rachel's re-education illustrates the incompatibility of intellectuality and femininity (especially feminine usefulness), but *The Clever Woman* also maintains that learning and talent can be employed by feminine means to home-useful ends. through Ermine Williams, the novel's other clever woman.[57] Ermine, who has had the benefit of "father and brother to keep [her] . . . in order," embodies truly clever womanhood in her reserved, homebound, family-centered deployment of her considerable intellect and learning (30.547). Kim Wheatley positions Ermine as the novel's embodiment of feminine self-effacement via her contrast with Rachel. Wheatley compares Rachel's schoolroom-turned-study strewn with her books and homeopathy, to "Ermine's household, [where,] by contrast, her work is not exactly hidden, but never obtrusive" in

[57] Ermine is one of three clever woman. Rachel, of course, is one, and the novel implicates Bessie Keith as another by having Rachel call her "the most practically clever person I ever saw" (30.547) and titling the chapter in which she dies "The End of Cleverness" (26.467). The fact that the novel's final chapter, "Who is the Clever Woman?", ends with Ermine's name suggests that she is, in fact, the true model of cleverness and femininity (30.540).

order to highlight how Ermine subordinates her literary and educational work to her performance of domestic femininity (144). For example, Ermine's career as contributor to *The Traveller's Review*, undertaken to help support her family, primarily consists of a "series of educational papers" (3.86) that includes articles on "systematic reading" (3.105) and "the Edgeworth system" (3.81). These articles suggest that though Ermine writes professionally, she does so for a domestic audience, one interested in practical hints on self-education and child-rearing. Feminine usefulness pervades Ermine's contributions to *The Traveller*, as does her association with the magazine (including an interim editorship), for it begins as a favor to the editor, a friend of her brother's. Ermine's familial professional connections and her infusion of "a bit of heart and home" into her articles, as well as the domestic subject matter of her work, demonstrate how learning and intellectuality can be handmaidens, not hindrances, to domestic usefulness and proper femininity (4.121). Thus, though Rachel's need to be re-educated in order to embody feminine womanhood registers the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality, Ermine's brand of clever womanhood establishes that femininity does not preclude learning or intellectual talent, as long as they do not displace woman's proper, providential home usefulness.

### BROTHERLY INFLUENCE AND WOMANLY "HOME USEFULNESS"

Rachel's re-education in *The Clever Woman* mirrors Ethel's progress of maturation in *The Daisy Chain*, as both learned young women develop into home usefulness and feminine womanhood only by giving up their ambitions of intellectuality. My readings of Rachel's and Ethel's plots establish intellectuality and education as

incompatible with true womanhood primarily because they encourage selfishness or self-sufficiency and lead to ambitions beyond the sphere of family and community. This section elaborates on the novels' shared representation of the incompatibility between intellectuality and femininity by reading Ethel's and Rachel's similar ambitions to write for publication as evidence of the novels' depiction of such intellectual means as improper and ineffective for aiding the clever woman's projects or her feminine development. Turning then to the novel's representations of that feminine development, I conclude by emphasizing how male relationships, especially that between a brother and sister, inspire, but ultimately curtail female intellectuality, diverting it to properly home-useful channels. Both novels connect scholarship to ambition through Rachel's and Ethel's shared aspiration to gain influence (and money for their pet projects) by writing for publication. For example, Ethel imagines herself as especially able to "compose, publish, earn money" for her church at Cocksmoor (3.22-23). This idea serves her philanthropic plan more than it serves her ego, yet there is something of self-seeking in her line of thought: "she had heard in books, of girls writing poetry, romance, history--gaining fifties and hundreds. Could not some of the myriads of fancies floating in her mind thus be made available?" (1.3.22). Ethel's ambition to publish recalls her other ambition, "to know what other girls did not," and savors of an impulse to superiority. In fact, she does place "a ballad" in a school magazine, but Richard's reading of it, which exposes to her its pretension and poor composition, humiliates her and cures Ethel of her ambition for publication (2.5.343).

Rachel, by contrast, never sees her work published and clings to her ambition of literary influence. A keen consumer of periodicals, Rachel desires to wield the pen for her own causes, admitting, "I should like to have as much influence over people's minds" as the popular contributor who turns out to be Ermine (3.105). Indeed, she posits such a career as the readiest means of finding her mission within the confines of femininity, imaging that "if I can make myself useful with my pen, it will compensate for the being debarred from so many more obvious outlets" (3.105). The extent of Rachel's literary ambition becomes clear in her ecstasy at the idea that her industrial school might publish its own periodical. She exults in the prospect of "a domestic magazine, an outlet to all the essays on Curatocult, on Helplessness, on Female Folly and Female Rights" with "no dull editor to hamper, reject or curtail!" (10.229). Rachel's enthusiasm for her prospective *Journal of Female Industry* illustrates not only her eagerness to influence others through her writing, but also her failure to publish any of the essays she has written (16.311). Itself refusing to publish any of Rachel's writings, the novel portrays Rachel's essays as unreadable not only because of their harmful content, but also because of their poor style. In "Curatocult," for example, "the irony was wormwood, the gravity sententious, and where there was a just a thought . . . it seemed to travel in a road wagon and be lost in the rumbling of the wheels" (3.105). If this article seems unreadable, then Rachel's attempt at fiction proves unwritable. Her "tale on the distresses of woman" suffers from Rachel's "heavily weighting her slender thread of story with disquisitions on economy and charity" (11.253). Like "Curatocult," this article does not see publication, registering the unfitness of Rachel's ambitions as well as her abilities for achieving them.

These failed attempts at publication also, in Wagner's claim, represent the novels' "punishment of ambition for ambition's sake" ("Led" 309). She finds that Yonge's "would-be clever women frequently display a form of hubris as they boil down their version of the world to pedantic attempts at thinly-fictionalized diatribes," which the novel must ultimately quash as antithetical to self-effacing, useful femininity (309). Wagner reads the "relish" with which the novels narrate the "failure or curtailing of their [clever women's] potential" as part of an effort to discourage individualistic or self-aggrandizing behavior (310). My reading of Rachel's and Ethel's failed attempts at authorship take up Wagner's emphasis on the clever girl's curtailed ambition and potential in order to stress how the failure of Rachel's and Ethel's ambitions outside familial and domestic channels illustrate intellectuality's propensity to direct the learned woman's attentions away from her providential domestic familial networks. Rachel's and Ethel's learned writings prove ineffective for advancing their causes, but as they mature into true, useful womanhood their goals are eventually achieved through communal means.

Through Rachel's re-education and Ethel's maturation, *The Clever Woman* and *The Daisy Chain* assert that advanced study contains the potential to distract a woman from her home interests and duties (as with Ethel's shirking of needlework in favor of Latin) or to disinterest her in them (as with Rachel's view of feminine conventionality as keeping her "tethered down"). The incompatibility of scholarship and useful femininity means that girls' learning must be guided and regulated, if not discontinued at the opening of adulthood. Yet both novels also depict learning as enhancing the clever

woman's ability to perform the particular tasks of femininity. For example, Ethel's training in precision and application in time make her the indispensable manager of the May household. Similarly, Ermine and Col. Keith agree that Rachel's re-education has transformed her into "a thorough wife and mother," but that she is "all the more so for her being awake to larger interests and doing common things better for being the clever woman of the family" (*Clever* 30.545). Both women's domestic endings establish that "her powers were as good for household matters as for books" (*Daisy* 2.7.358). These endings also serve to reinforce providential, familial duties as those for which a woman's powers were given.

While their roles as wives and mothers (or in Ethel's case, daughter and mother-figure) exemplify Rachel's and Ethel's assumption of femininity, their earlier roles as sisters--especially to a brother--proves equally central to their intellectuality. The trope of the "scholarly sister" helps to illuminate the novels' shared concern with turning education to the right purposes. In *The Daisy Chain*, a brother serves as Ethel's reason for classical study as well as the means by which she accomplishes it. Without Norman's tuition and explanation of the week's assignments, or Richard's old textbooks, Ethel could not have learned Latin and Greek. Moreover, it is Norman's counsel that ultimately convinces Ethel to reduce her time spent on classics: his insistence that "minding nothing else" besides study will make her "good for nothing . . . did much to reconcile Ethel's mind to the sacrifice" (*Daisy* 1.18.164). Norman's influence both stimulates Ethel's scholarship and regulates it, keeping her from becoming "a regular learned lady" (*Daisy* 1.18.164). Norman's above comment regulates Ethel's intellectual enthusiasm by

pointing up the lack of utility in her pursuit of classical education. So, too, does his example, for whereas Norman's education, including university study, prepares him for a career, the idea of Ethel's university study only serves to demonstrate the folly of her scholastic ambitions. By force of contrast, then, Norman's education underscores the lack of utility of Ethel's classical study and thus helps persuade her to put it aside in favor of her womanly work in the home.

In *The Clever Woman*, brothers similarly figure as salutary checks on female scholarship. Indeed, Bessie Keith sums up the novel's view of such guidance when she accepts criticism, saying, "a little check just makes one feel one is cared for" (*Clever* 8.197). Similarly, Ermine cheerfully recalls the influence of her brother on her own nascent intellectuality when she identifies Rachel as "just what I should have been without papa and Edward to keep me down" (*Clever* 7.169). Rachel, initially so proud of owning no influence other than her own reason and conscience, eventually learns the benefits of having a superior (male) mind to guide her study, admitting, "I should have been much better if I had had either father or brother to keep me in order" (*Clever* 30.547). Taken together *The Clever Woman* and *The Daisy Chain* present male family members, especially brothers, as often responsible for female involvement with study and scholarship as well as the best guides for female learning. Brothers lend female study a home interest (as in Ethel's continuing to keep up with Norman in order to maintain their close relationship) or a home application (as in Ethel's tuition of Aubrey) as well as a wider view of the world and often a superior intellect to correct or enhance knowledge (as in Ermine's view of Edward's role in her education). The novels' positioning of the

clever woman as having or needing a brother to inspire and guide her intellectual development essentially reinforces their vision of femininity as bound by family and driven by home ties and duties.

In conclusion, *The Clever Woman* and *The Daisy Chain* articulate key mid-Victorian assumptions about women's education and scholarship through their learned and learning female characters. Both novels both invoke the mid-Victorian stereotype of the intellectual woman as physically and behaviorally unfeminine, in Ethel's gangly, clumsy resemblance to her father and Rachel's sharp countenance and "manful" bearing, as well as in both young women's severely simple (or complete disregard for) style. These characterizations reinforce the novels' depiction of Ethel and Rachel as clever women, just as both characters' eventual softening of feature and style mark their transition to femininity. Rachel's and Ethel's strong features and tall, lanky bodies connote their difference from more feminine family members, further reinforcing differences in outlook and interest, but neither novel suggests that education has stunted their development or perverted their bodies. In fact, the softened appearances their growing femininity lends to Rachel and Ethel are primarily the result of a changed manner, not a changed body.

While *The Clever Woman* and *The Daisy Chain* employ the trope of the masculine educated woman as a marker, they remain much more concerned with learning's mental and social effects than with its physical effects. Ethel's and Rachel's boyish vigor, impatience with typically feminine tasks, and their brusque, unpolished, or unheeding manners indicate a lack of the refinement and care for others that are part of

proper femininity. More importantly, these unfeminine behaviors define advanced study and intellectual ambition as engendering an unfeminine selfishness in women. Advanced intellectual pursuits generate self-will in part because their pursuit benefits no one but the student--and the main benefit is often to her pride.

Both novels present education as, above all, a means of preparing young people for their future lives, in terms of vocation as well as character. This concern with the everyday applicability of education lies behind both *The Daisy Chain*'s and *The Clever Woman*'s anxiety that their learned young ladies leave behind theories or abstractions in favor of real-world experience and action. For example, Ermine Williams repeatedly identifies Rachel's belief that "it is much more difficult to describe from one's own observation than from other sources" as the source of her failures (*Clever* 7.160) and blames her willful heedlessness on her dependence on "preconceived notions . . . your theory suffices you and you don't see small indications" (*Clever* 16.313). The novel ratifies Ermine's judgment by presenting Rachel's immersion in the day-to-day affairs of Bishopsworthy parish as essential to her re-education and assumption of feminine usefulness. Similarly, *The Daisy Chain* presents Ethel's practical work educating Cocksmoor's children as "just the thing to prevent her energies from running to waste" (*Daisy* 1.9.80). Margaret, Dr. May, and the novel agree that "the discipline of those little tiresome things" keeps Ethel's "high things [feelings and aspirations] from being all romance" and trains her in the everyday tasks of the daughter at home (*Daisy* 1.6.54). *The Clever Woman* and *The Daisy Chain* dramatize the learned young lady's need for training

in practical duties of everyday life in order to achieve her "rightful position as helpmeet" (*Womankind* 1.4).

The progress away from intellectually defined ambitions to fulfillment in (and of) home duties that characterizes both Ethel's growing up and Rachel's re-education clearly marks the novels' ideal of femininity as incompatible with the kind of dedicated study which brothers and husbands can pursue. Such an education is incompatible with womanhood because it takes the student's efforts and attentions away from the home usefulness by which the novels define femininity. By taking up Ethel's time and souring Rachel on conventional means of aiding her community, these clever women's educations and intellectual tastes obstruct their progress towards adult femininity. Therefore, both novels depict the movement away from study as a key component of Ethel's and Rachel's maturation to womanhood.

The lesson that excessive education and proper adult femininity are incompatible is not just for Ethel and Rachel to learn: it is also for them to teach. Kristen Moruzi's conclusion that "by suggesting that girls read texts that endorse home duties and identify the risks of excessive study, Yonge presents a feminine ideal that endorses a girl's responsibility within the home," applies to her novels as much as it does to her editorship of *The Monthly Packet* ("'Inferiority'" 69). The process of didactic identification generated by *The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman* encourages readers who have recognized themselves in Ethel's and Rachel's enthusiasm and facility for learning come to imagine themselves as the capable helpmeet. Through plots in which readers learn that, like the main characters, their own "powers [are] as good for household matters as for

books," Yonge's novels of scholarly sisters both dramatize and resolve the antithesis of scholarship and femininity at the heart of mid-Victorian discourse about female education (*Daisy* 2.5.358).

## Chapter 3: Home Learning: Education and Models of Femininity in Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*

"To Dickens we are vastly indebted--can there be a doubt of it?--for our advance in the matter of female education," declares George Gissing in his 1925 *The Immortal Dickens* (5.4.n.p.). Looking back upon what must have seemed an educational dark age from the vantage point of an era of female university students, Gissing's claim suggests that Dickens's representation of the faults and foibles of the female mind illustrates the deficiencies of Victorian education. This chapter, while not as sanguine about our debt to Dickens for advances in female education, takes up Gissing's identification of Dickens's female characters as models who mirror social realities. Gissing's sense of how characters exemplify or expose practices and ideals informs the following readings of female learning in *Bleak House* (1853) and *Hard Times* (1854).[58]

The previous chapter argued that Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and *The Clever Woman of the Family* (1865) depict maturation to a womanhood defined by service to the patriarchal family as necessarily involving a girl's renunciation of scholarly ambition. Yonge's novels intimate that their heroines' learning hinders or distorts their femininity when it oversteps the bounds of domestic utility and male oversight. By positioning a renunciation of ambitious learning as a condition of a girl's proper maturation and happy adulthood, *The Daisy Chain* and *The Clever Woman* uphold the

[58] *Bleak House* was serialized in monthly parts from March 1852 to September 1853. It was published in volume form in 1853. *Hard Times* was serialized in Dickens's weekly magazine *Household Words* from April to August 1854. It was published in volume form in 1854.

incompatibility at the heart of mid-Victorian perceptions of female education, that between intellectual attainments and proper femininity.

Dickens's first two novels of the 1850s, *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, engage this incompatibility between learning and femininity, associating girls' education with both ideal housekeeping and transgressive home-wrecking. My readings find that whereas Yonge's novels encapsulate the incompatibility in a single character who renounces ambitious learning to achieve femininity, Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* split the two attributes: *Bleak House*'s Esther Summerson illustrates how formal and self-guided instruction can generate or reinforce femininity, and *Hard Time*'s Louisa Gradgrind represents the harmful effects of an education that denies woman's specific roles and ways of knowing.

Countless critics have considered Dickens's novels' engagement with female experience and development.[59] For example, in *Dickens and Women* (1983), Michael Slater classifies Dickens's novels of the mid-1840s to the mid-1850s as particularly focused on "women and their nature" (242), noting their "central concern . . . [with] dangers, frustrations, and humiliations experienced by women in the male-oriented world of Victorian England" (243). Where Slater's reading neglects any representation of female development beyond "social and sexual trials" (244), feminist readings, like Katherine Retan's, have registered the novels' "increasing . . . preoccup[ation] with representing a young woman's progress toward assuming the role of angel in the house"

[59] For example, Cole's thoroughly helpful survey of "Dickens and Gender: Recent Studies, 1992-2007" includes more than 110 entries.

(184). This chapter examines one significant aspect of the novels' representation of the "young woman's progress," her education. By analyzing how Esther Summerson's self-instruction in *Bleak House* yields a domestically useful woman whose femininity upholds familial and social structures as well as how Louisa Gradgrind's factual training in *Hard Times* engenders a rational, dispassionate woman whose distorted femininity disrupts conventional social formations, this chapter considers how explicit education (in contrast to Slater's emphasis on "social and sexual trials" as an oblique form of nurture) impacts a female character's achievement of her womanhood (244).

This chapter tracks how the concept of womanhood is defined and modified locally, within the novels themselves. However, it also recognizes these local articulations as connected to conceptions of femininity illustrated in Dickens's non-novelistic writings and espoused by the society to which and for which his writing attempted to speak. Indeed, though literary-critical as well as biographical studies have come increasingly to appreciate Dickens's representations of femininity as nuanced and sometimes self-contradictory, there remains a sense that the man and his texts embody the conventions of his day in nothing so much as their sanctification of middle-class domesticity and the sympathetic, self-sacrificing woman who animates it. Slater, in his chapter on Dickens's "Womanly Ideal," perhaps best sums up this common viewpoint when he notes that the "idea of virtuous womanhood as possessed of innate, God-given powers to uplift, regenerate, and redeem, which is so ubiquitous in Dickens's writing, is inextricably bound up with his celebrated idealization of the domestic" (309). Before addressing the learning women of *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, I will briefly

contextualize their presentations of femininity by turning to two depictions of womanhood-in-training in Dickens's extra-novelistic writing.

## AN "INSTANCE OF PATIENT WOMANLY DEVOTION": DICKENS, FEMININITY, AND EDUCATION

The visions of developing femininity expressed in the following letter and article serve as especially telling indicators of Dickensian femininity as well as its relation to education because they necessarily call up the goal in the process of working towards it. Both Dickens's private depiction of a young orphan, Esther Elton, and his public explanation of his "Home for the reclamation and emigration of women" demonstrate the centrality of English, middle-class mores to his representation of femininity ("Home" 169). Through the gloss of Dickens's feminine ideal, not only orphans but also "homeless" (often working-class) women become subject to middle-class standards. The class-valence of Dickens's ideal of feminine domesticity appears in an 1845 letter to Lady Burdett-Coutts,[60] which introduces one Esther Elton, who has become a schoolmistress after "training at the Normal School" (Johnson 70). Her education and future career, which suggest a lower-middle-class background, or family fallen on pecuniary difficulties, is noteworthy, Dickens's letter intimates, because it testifies to her devotion to her family and her determination to keep it together via her role as wage earner. Previously "her poor father's poor housekeeper," she entered the Normal School after his death "though it involved her separation from her little sisters to whom she feels as a mother" (Johnson 70). Dickens's letter frames Esther Elton's education with

[60] Lady Angela Burdett-Coutts, the "richest heiress in all England" during the second half of the nineteenth century, became an intimate friend of Dickens's through her philanthropic work (see Healy).

references to her domestic and maternal roles as "housekeeper" and "mother," thus positioning domestic and familial concerns as both the impetus and end of female learning. Though slight, this sketch of Esther Elton as "an instance of patient womanly devotion" draws a clear picture of what womanhood should entail, a commitment to the integrity of the middle-class family (Johnson 70).

Dickens's 1853 essay "Home for Homeless Women" establishes a middle-class, domestic womanhood much like the one embodied by Esther Elton for working-class, destitute, and troubled women. The leading piece in the 23 April number of *Household Words*, "Home for Homeless Women" contains "an exact account of [the] . . . progress and results" of Urania Cottage, Dickens's and Burdett-Coutts's "Home for the reclamation and emigration of women" (169). The details and implications of Dickens's involvement with Urania Cottage, which have been ably explored by Jenny Hartley and Rosemarie Bodenheimer, among others, are beyond the scope of the present argument. Instead, I consider how the Home's "progress and results" imply a particular concept of womanhood. Tellingly, in a parallel of many middle- and upper-class boarding schools for girls, the article's insistence on the facility as a "Home" and its designation of the inmates as "the family" position middle-class domesticity as the true state of womanhood in its structuring of a distinctly un-familial rehabilitation center as a domestic unit (170).

Not only are the women inmates rehabilitated in a home, but they are also rehabilitated for the home. The two-fold goal of making them "a blessing to themselves and others" and of "raising up among the . . . new world some virtuous homes" designates womanhood as a relational position centered on service and as the maker of

homes (169).[61] Homemaking thus forms the essence of the rehabilitative training: "[B]ook-education is of a very plain kind, as they have generally much to learn in the commonest domestic duties" (170). The inmates spend the bulk of their time in cleaning, cooking, and needlework, with a cycle of daily tasks so that each "may become practically acquainted with the whole routine of household duties" (170). Though the above-quoted goal of preparing the inmates to "raise . . . virtuous homes" conveys a goal of marriage, in effect the training of Urania Cottage prepares them to be servants, a reversal that foregrounds the uneven, ambivalent ways in which this class-inflected concept of femininity impacted women outside of the middle classes. Similarly, Urania Cottage's emphasis on household duties trains the women so that they may earn respectable livelihoods as servants, cooks, and companions while implying marriage and "good housewifery" as the ultimate goal of and reward for their work (170).

Just as woman makes a home, making a home makes a woman. For example, the constant, cyclical nature of domestic work is praised as able to draw the inmates away from past associations and bad habits and towards the home's standards for feminine behavior (172). Yet more than housework is needed to inculcate womanliness, for the Home's rehabilitation strategy includes character instruction. In addition to the monitoring of their domestic labor, the women earn "marks" on a number of character traits, such as "Truthfulness, Industry, Temper, Propriety of Conduct and Conversation, Temperance, Order, Punctuality, Economy, Cleanliness" (171). The emphasis on

[61] This vision of woman as "raising up among the solitudes of the new world some virtuous homes" prefigures Ruskin's characterization of the "true wife" as having "home. . . always round her" in "Of Queens' Gardens" (99).

charitable work, such as learning to "make soup for the poor and sick" also reflects the association between domestic service and feminine character, for such a task, according to Dickens's article, "at once extends their domestic knowledge, and preserves their sympathy for the distressed" (172). Again, the instruction in womanliness (or here, its preservation) contains an education in middle-class mores. Moreover, this reference to making soup as "preserving their sympathy" claims that though the inmates may "know little or nothing of such work, and have it all to learn," they all possess, as women, a natural sympathy which soup-making and other charity helps to preserve. Thus, this article portrays femininity as both essential and constructed.

Together, these two depictions of developing womanhood, the "progress and results" of Urania Cottage and the miniature "progress" of Esther Elton, convey an ideal of femininity bounded by middle-class ideas of domesticity and the family but marked by ambivalence about whether it is inalienable or a matter of instruction. Woman makes the home, but the home makes the woman as an arena in which she learns and practices feminine sympathy and usefulness. In their shared emphases on womanhood as a condition of learning skills but at the same time as a natural condition held by all females, no matter how young or "homeless," Dickens's depictions of Urania Cottage and Esther Elton uneasily define femininity as both inalienable and capable of cultivation.

If femininity is both an inherent quality and a matter of instruction, as the above readings assert, then education becomes a crucial component of feminine development. Dickens's work throughout his career demonstrates an acute sense of education's impact on the individual's development. For example, by the time of *Hard Time*'s publication,

he had been involved with the Ragged School movement for almost ten years, assessed American schools (especially those for the orphaned and disabled) in *American Notes* (1842), written numerous articles on particular schools and systems of education as well as on the relationship between education and crime, as well as addressed and fundraised for educational associations from the Governesses Benevolent Institution to the Manchester and Birmingham Mechanics Institutes.[62] Yet contemporaries and critics alike have considered Dickens to be primarily invested in and successful at reforming education for middle- and lower-class boys. Phillip Collins, for example, has the power of Dotheboys Hall, Blimber's Academy, and Salem House,--all male-only schools--in mind when he praises the "mythological efficacy of the Dickens schools" to effect reform (2).

In terms of women's education, Dickens's novels mainly concern themselves with the superficial education offered at boarding schools or from an incompetent governess. Both major twentieth-century studies of Dickens and education view his representation of female learning as "more conventional and more repetitive" than his treatments of male education (Collins 136). For example, John Manning asserts that Dickens's "general treatment of the education of girls is mainly satirical" (124), echoing Collins's complaint that Dickens's novels confine themselves to "old ways, indeed the old stock characters of popular mythology--downtrodden governesses and mincing schoolmarms" (41). However, such a representation of Dickens's engagement with female learning as limited

[62] For a detailed chronology of Dickens's involvement with educational matters, see "A Chronological Table of Dickens's Main Educational Activities and Writings" in Collins, *Dickens and Education* (222-25).

to governesses and schoolmarms obscures the fact that the novels depict a range of female educational experience, from the Marchioness's schooling in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and Dora's alluring, impractical accomplishments in *David Copperfield* (1850) to Little Dorrit's instruction in elocution by Mrs. General and the professional but still feminine Miss Peecher in *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). Moreover, the novels' frequent depictions of young women as instructors, such as Agnes's and Biddy's schools, Nell's writing lessons for Kit Nubbles, Florence's tuition of Paul, and Lizzie's reading lessons for Jenny Wren, position teaching as an extension of woman's natural capacity for affectionate service. However, not all the female characters associated with education in Dickens's novels embody this ideal mode of education. The comic and grotesque depictions of educated women like Sally Brass and Cornelia Blimber evince an anxiety about the ability of education, especially masculine types of education such as the law, classics, or scientific training, to cultivate unfeminine women.

Though I do not want to read Dickens's personal opinions and actions as keys to his novels' representations of female education, I believe the ambivalence and satire with which Dickens's novels frequently treat female education, especially formal education, may have roots in Dickens's own educational experiences, specifically his anger at being taken out of school while his older sister Fanny studied at the Royal Academy of Music. As Collins recounts, "[H]e told Forster 'what a stab to his heart it was' to see her go off in glory while he remained untaught at home" (Collins 8). Dickens's bitterness at being educationally neglected, which Collins considers more "a sense rather of present social disgrace and blasted future hopes, than of intellectual deprivation," aligns him with Emily

Davies and other women who resented their families' privileging of brothers' educations over theirs (9). Thus, Dickens's childhood participation in a quintessentially female experience of education in mid-Victorian England may inform his frequently satiric representations of female education as either frivolous or harmful.

*Bleak House* and *Hard Times* reflect the ideals and anxieties evident in Dickens's considerations and representations of female education. Though Esther's and Louisa's educations differ greatly, as do the outcomes of those educations, the novels share a presentation of education as powerfully imbricated in the characters' maturation to womanhood. In sum, the following arguments examine how these two novels translate the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality into a representation of education as ambivalent: potentially able to engender domestic womanhood or to distort it.

## "The obligations of home": Learning Femininity in *Bleak House*

Before examining the education of Esther Summerson, the infamously obfuscating narrator of half of *Bleak House*, I want to return briefly to the education of Esther Elton, for the Esther of Dickens's letter serves as a model for the fictional Esther. I do not contend that Dickens based his character on a girl he met once; instead, I assert that his depiction of her education models an essential component of *Bleak House*'s representation of female education. Esther Elton's example exhibits how a girl's formal education yields to training for feminine service. In Dickens's account, Esther's rigorous formal training is overshadowed by her past and ongoing familial service through references to her father, for whom she previously worked in the home, and to her sisters, for whom she works now as a schoolmistress. The letter's approbation of Esther Elton's

"never turn[ing] from" her education at the Normal School, "though it involved her separation from her little sisters," effectively positions female education as a manifestation of the feminine service that works to hold together the middle-class family of which she is the heart (Johnson 70). Esther Summerson's education stresses this close association between a girl's learning and her ability to perform the domestic familial service that perpetuates the family.

The following readings of *Bleak House* argue that Esther's engagement with education over the course of the novel dramatizes education's potential to train a woman for the type of domestic, familial service that the novel identifies with femininity. In Esther's case, education includes formal schooling as well as self-guided and self-administered instruction, both of which center on teaching knowledge and skills of middle-class womanhood. However, the increasingly affective inflection of Esther's learning suggests that this concept of learning femininity and familial service nevertheless partakes of education's potential hazard to the individual. Esther's increasingly manic auto-didacticism exhibits an internalization of feminine self-effacement taken to an extreme. Esther's education indicates that when turned toward the right ideas and ends, female education can produce feminine womanhood, but that even then it harbors a potential to disrupt that womanliness or at least the individual woman performing it. In order to uncover this disruptive potential lurking in education's training of feminine service, the following section begins by establishing how *Bleak House* participates in a definition of femininity that aligns woman with the types of service that perpetuate home and family. It then examines Esther's learning and how it inculcates this

concept of femininity, tracing Esther's progress and what it suggests about education's capabilities and its influence on the individual woman.

*Bleak House* articulates a femininity defined by service to the domestic, in terms of both the individual, middle-class home and the English homeland as opposed to the wider, colonial world, often through negative examples. Mrs. Jellyby's neglect of husband and children in favor of philanthropy for Africa serves as the novel's touchstone of "wrong" womanhood, but it is the evangelical Mrs. Pardiggle against whom the novel expounds what right femininity entails. For example, though their experience of the Jellyby household leads Esther and Ada to pronounce womanhood to be essentially tied to "the obligations of home," a definition that encompasses both domesticity and service, Mrs. Pardiggle prompts Esther to fix woman's duty within her own familial sphere (6.82). Countering Mrs. Pardiggle's concept of the middle-class woman's duty, Esther asserts the primacy of service, but locates it firmly in the local and personal, explaining, "I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could, to those immediately about me; and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and naturally expand itself" (8.128). This explanation serves as Esther's refusal to join Mrs. Pardiggle on her campaigns into the houses of the working classes, reinforcing home-centered action by characterizing Mrs. Pardiggle's incursions into others' homes as ludicrous, if not harmful. This "circle of duty" that begins with "those immediately about" echoes Esther's earlier articulation of "the obligations of home" to affirm that this personal service constitutes her femininity as well as her best means of effecting change.

Just as Esther's above explanation instructs the reader in a femininity defined by "home usefulness," to return to Yonge's phrase, so do her actions instruct other women in that femininity during the course of the novel (*Daisy* 2.1.302). For example, upon becoming engaged, Caddy Jellyby begs Esther to teach her "housekeeping," and the two embark on a series of lessons at Miss Flite's lodgings which end in Caddy's proud declaration, "I can make little puddings . . . and I know how to buy neck of mutton, and tea, and sugar, and butter, and a good many housekeeping things," and her sense of greater femininity (14.231). Ada, too, requests Esther's tuition, and her formulation of that request makes explicit what was implicit in Esther's earlier training of Caddy: "Esther, my dearest, I want to be a good wife, a very, very good wife indeed. You shall teach me" (60.927). By linking home usefulness to Ada's and Caddy's perception of what it means to be "a very good wife indeed," *Bleak House* further delineates womanhood in terms of domestic, familial service, if not labor. Moreover, the implication that Ada and Caddy can learn how to be good wives--and can learn it from a woman who remains unmarried until the last pages of the novel--evinces the primacy of home usefulness to all iterations of femininity, from spinster (Esther), to lower-middle-class wife (Caddy), to upper-middle-class wife (Ada). It further presents female education as able to train a girl or woman in the skills and knowledge that enable her to perform her definitive service.

Caddy's earlier lament of Esther's tuition, "If you could only have taught me, I could have learnt from you. . . . I like you so much," demonstrates another component of both femininity and female education, their relation to affection (4.62). In Caddy's

formulation, affection facilitates learning, a claim that Esther also makes for herself. In fact, such an representation of the female mind as stimulated by affection opens Esther's narration. "I have a great deal of difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages," she admits, "for I know I am not clever" (3.27). Yet though she is not clever, and does not feel herself to have "by any means a quick understanding," Esther finds, "When I love a person very tenderly indeed, it seems to brighten" (3.28). The repetition of this idea only a few paragraphs later, when Esther again mentions that "my comprehension is quickened when my affection is," balances her doubled negation of cleverness against a doubled assertion of the power of affection (3.29). Esther's recuperation of cleverness through affection, notably affection that she gives, not receives, like Caddy's sense that she could learn best from someone she likes, positions affection as an essential component of women's mental functioning (8.128).

By making affection an aid not only to female learning but to female "comprehension" and "understanding," *Bleak House* identifies it as a defining element of femininity. Ada's assertion of affection's impact on her knowledge, "The greatest wisdom that ever lived in the world could scarcely know Richard better than my love does," makes a further claim, that a woman's love-quickened understanding is the highest type, one that knows its subject best (60.928). Ada's declaration, made as a component of her vow to continue to love and support Richard even as his obsession with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit drives them to ruin and himself to death, situates her knowledge and, more importantly, the "love" which animates it, as essential components of her feminine nature as well as of her wifely (and motherly, for in this speech Ada reveals her

pregnancy) role. The novel's depiction of Caddy's "natural affection" as that which enables her to make a caring sister and, eventually, a devoted wife and mother despite the anti-domestic nurture of growing up in the Jellyby household further positions affection as an natural quality of the female sex (23.383). Moreover, as Caddy's and Ada's examples suggest, this feminine affection motivates and sustains the types of affective and practical service which define feminine womanhood.

Esther's concept of womanhood exemplifies the novel's association of feminine affection with her service to her "circle of duty" (8.128). Her articulation of feminine service, that it originates in "knowledge of the heart" and is best applied to "those immediately about," emphasizes the power of affection on both the woman herself and those she serves (8.128). Moreover, her childhood resolution to "strive as I grew up to be industrious, contented and kind-hearted, and to do some good to some one, and win some love to myself if I could" explicitly positions feminine service as Esther's means of generating love for and of herself (3.31). This self-declaration, which Alex Zwerdling has influentially read as Esther's "strategy for survival," her translation "into more social and less self-destructive terms" of her godmother's condemnation, indeed serves a strategic purpose (430). Her numerous repetitions of the "childish prayer of that old birthday" consistently reinforce the connection between feminine service and affection, identifying love as both the catalyst and the reward for woman's "industrious" service, which begins in and radiates out from the home (35.563). In sum, through the examples of "wrong" women and of girls who grow up to be very good wives indeed, such as Caddy, Ada, and Esther, *Bleak House* establishes femininity as animated by affection and performed

through loving, practical service that generates and holds a "circle of duty" around the woman (8.128).

In its fusion of the affective and practical, *Bleak House*'s definition of womanhood registers an ambivalent understanding of femininity as at once innate and cultivated. The novel establishes feminine service as the product of a woman's "natural affection," but it also presents femininity as a matter of learning (23.383). Esther's birthday resolution and her tuition of Ada and Caddy demonstrate education's ability to generate or reinforce femininity by teaching feminine knowledge and skills as well as feminine character. For example, Ada's typically upper-middle-class education indicates this capacity to produce womanhood in a basic sense, for the fact that she "[c]an dance, and play music, and sing . . . . talk French . . . and do geography, and globes, and needlework, and every thing" marks Ada as a finished young lady (4.60). Ada's accomplishments make her instantly recognizable as a young lady because they signal the successful acquisition of a lady's education. Turning to Esther's education, I explore how her example represents education's capacity to train girls into feminine womanhood as well as education's potential to undermine the individual's performance of femininity.

Living with her "godmother," Esther begins her education much like many mid-century middle-class girls do. She attends a "neighbouring school" as "a day boarder" (3.29). This boarding school houses a small number of students--only "seven girls" besides Esther--in an effort to maintain the home-like atmosphere thought most conducive to girls' instruction and safest for their delicate constitutions (3.29). After her godmother's death, Esther proceeds to Greenleaf, "a first-rate establishment; where her

education shall be completed" (3.35). Like Esther Elton before her, Esther is left without a home and family to support her, and so her education becomes training for a career. Unlike many of Greenleaf's other students, who ostensibly attend for the same kind of finishing Ada exhibits, Esther must "apply herself to the acquisition of those accomplishments, upon the exercise of which she will be ultimately dependent" as a governess (3.35).

Esther does not offer a detailed accounting of her studies, but the reference to "accomplishments" and its end of enabling Esther to support herself as a governess suggests that her education consists mainly of the skills and knowledge thought appropriate for a middle- or upper-class young lady. Esther's instructional range is further suggested in her equal ease in teaching Charley to write and in "read[ing], and work[ing] . . . and practis[ing]" with accomplished Ada (9.137). Esther's experiences at day school and at Greenleaf represent education as able to teach femininity by instructing the individual girl in the knowledge and skills which signal ladylikeness and prepare her to undertake the domestic, familial service that makes her a feminine woman.

Esther's formal education, especially her role as a pupil-teacher, who is "not only instructed in everything that was taught" but "soon engaged in helping to instruct others," further illustrates learning's ability to teach femininity in its intimate relation to affectionate service (3.39). Esther's position as pupil-teacher quickly becomes as affective as it is intellectual, for as she notes, "As I began to know more, I taught more . . . which I was very fond of doing, because it made the dear girls fond of me" (3.39). She soon becomes the little mother of Greenleaf, having "all newcomers . . . confided to my

care" (3.39). The fondness of her fellow students and her role as caretaker of new students, serves, for Esther, as compensation for her work, reinforcing her view of usefulness as the means of showing and earning love. By linking her teaching of Greenleaf's curriculum to affective service, epitomized in her care for the "downcast and unhappy" students, *Bleak House* registers how education can cultivate feminine character (3.39).

Esther's education does not end when she leaves Greenleaf. In fact, my contention that education can teach the girl both the practical and affective skills of womanhood casts Esther's self-instruction at Bleak House as her primary means of education in femininity. Though ostensibly Ada's companion, Esther's duties at Bleak House prove mainly domestic, for on the evening she arrives, Esther receives "a basket . . . with two bunches of keys in it, all labelled. . . . The housekeeping keys" (6.88). Esther shows herself eager to learn, appointing "to-morrow morning . . . . at half-past six" as the time for the maid to begin her orientation (6.89). Esther learns quickly, for she soon has "no trouble with my two bunches of keys" (8.115). She settles into housekeeping and seems in a constant state of learning and practicing her new duties. But Esther does not come to Bleak House to be its head servant. Instead, she becomes the mistress of the home, presiding not only over "the contents of each little storeroom drawer, and cupboard" but also over the family party made by Jarndyce, his two cousins, and herself (8.115). Esther's role as "little housekeeper" thus carries a double charge which reflects the ultimate end of all feminine domestic service: she is responsible for keeping the house

running smoothly and for keeping it a house by holding its intimates together as a family (17.277).

The novel reinforces this link between feminine domestic service and the stability of the family through the nicknames by which Jarndyce, Ada, and Richard come to address her.[63] These nicknames, such as "Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden," highlight Esther's physical role as house-keeper, while the affection that animates the application of these names to her--and the fact that Jarndyce, Ada, and Richard unite in using them--highlights her affective role as home-keeper (8.121). Jarndyce's association of Esther with the "little old woman" of the nursery rhyme illustrates this connection, and so is worth quoting at length:

> "You are clever enough to be the good little woman of our lives here, my dear . . . the little old woman of the . . . Rhyme.
> 'Little old woman, and whither so high?'--
> 'To sweep the cobwebs out of the sky.'
> You will sweep them so neatly out of *our* sky, in the course of your housekeeping, Esther, that one of these days, we shall have to abandon the Growlery, and nail up the door."
>
> This was the beginning of my being called Old Woman, and Little Old Woman, and Cobweb, and Mrs. Shipton, and Mother Hubbard, and Dame Durden, and so many names of that sort, that my own name soon became quite lost among them. (8.121)

Esther's work as housekeeper entails sweeping unhappiness out of Bleak House just as her work as pupil-teacher at Greenleaf included soothing unhappy new students. Importantly, in both cases Esther's affective service functions to assimilate the

[63] Frank further proposes that Esther's housekeeping generates not only an identifiable family, but also Esther's personal identity. Reading Esther's "dilemma" as "to become a some one," he claims that "Jarndyce and Bleak House provide Esther with an opportunity to define herself, to create an identity" (93). Malone makes a similar assertion, that "Jarndyce defines Esther's social identity, [by] giving her a place as housekeeper, and then as mistress, of Bleak House" (119).

individuals to their new institutional unit, effectively training them to become members of the family or the school. This function of woman's affective service enacts her formation of a "circle of duty" as a central component of femininity, and suggests that femininity's purpose, preserving the home and family, applies to all iterations of femininity, whether wife, mother, or spinster.

Bleak House, then, serves as the space in which Esther learns and practices the practically domestic and affective skills that make up the novel's definition of femininity. In addition to learning to manage the household keys and to hold their untraditional family together over the teapot, Esther employs a singular method of self-instruction to augment her education in feminine womanhood: self-scolding. I use the term "self-scolding" to designate instances in which Esther directly addresses herself. Esther narrates or references numerous examples of this self-address throughout the novel, and its frequency establishes it as integral to Esther's character.[64] Indeed, I assert that it is an essential component of making that character. While Thomas Linehan considers Esther's tendency to self-address a manifestation of her self-loathing, reading Esther's narrative as continually "engaging in very serious self-suppression and denial" (138) and Zwerdling sees it as exemplifying the "self-denigration [that] becomes Esther's essential lifestyle" (430), I argue that these moments of self-address also facilitate learning by allowing Esther to train herself in particular skills as well as to train her affective responses. By interpreting Esther's self-scolding as a deliberate process, my reading refutes Camille

[64] My reading identifies sixteen instances of this scolding self-address, beginning in the first chapter of her narration (chapter 3) and ranging through the last quarter of the novel (chapter 51).

Colatosti's reading of self-sacrifice as "a 'natural' force women do not control" in Dickens's novels (9).

Moments of self-scolding, in which Esther divides herself, creating a scolding and a scolded self who interact much like a teacher and a student, teach Esther femininity by training her to perform its definitive tasks.[65] Therefore, Esther's self-scolding frequently applies to day-to-day tasks, such as when she chides herself about keeping up proper correspondence, "Esther, my dear, I think you are quite sensible enough to sit down now, and write a note of thanks to your host" (36.571). This brief instance illustrates how Esther's self-scolding operates in its address to an "Esther" who is pointedly a "you," a distinct interlocutor in need of instruction. Esther's self-scolding often calls her to her domestic duty, as in, "'Once more, duty, duty, Esther,' said I" (38.609). This emphasis on her "duty" demonstrates how Esther's self-scolding instructs her in performance of femininity by training her to focus on her performance of home usefulness. Moreover, her continuation of this scolding--"and if you are not overjoyed to do it, more than cheerfully and contentedly, through anything and everything, you ought to be. That's all I have to say to *you*, my dear!"--registers the affective component of her self-instruction in home usefulness (38.609). Here, Esther's self-education through scolding mirrors the essential connection between feminine learning (femininity generally) and affection: by scolding herself not just to perform her duties but to perform them in the right spirit--

[65] This tendency to disassociation begins not only Esther's memories, but also her narrative. Esther's dual-voiced, dissociative tendency perhaps echoes *Bleak House*'s famously dual-voiced narration. For a reading of the effects of this disassociation and the male/female divide in the narrative, see Blain, and for an assessment of Esther's dual voices as a critical and an affirming voice and as creating an unstable "double vision," see Graver.

"cheerfully and contentedly, through anything and everything"--Esther fuses instruction in the performance of femininity through home usefulness with instruction in the performance of femininity through affection.

The association between duty and character, the sense that her practices form or fortify her feminine character, is strengthened in the above instance by Esther's recourse to a physical totem of those duties, her housekeeping keys. She prefaces her above turn to duty by "finding my housekeeping keys laid ready for me" and ringing "myself in as if it had been a new year, with a merry little peal" (38.609). The keys underscore her primary role as the performer of Bleak House's domestic tasks while their "merry . . . peal" voices Esther's own ideal of "cheerful" work, setting her an example. Esther similarly recruits her housekeeping keys as a means of reinforcing her ideal focus on duty during another instance. She chides, "'Esther, Esther, Esther! Duty, my dear!' and [gives] . . . my little basket of housekeeping keys such a shake, that they sound. . . like little bells, and [ring] . . . me hopefully to bed" (6.103). Again, Esther hears in the keys' bell-like resonance the "hopeful" tone she wishes to strike herself during--and through--her work in the home.

The confluence of duty and character signaled in the capacity of Esther's housekeeping keys and basket to assist her scolding pervades Esther's individual concept of femininity. Accordingly, this perception of her performance of duty as aiding her character development yields instances of self-instruction in which Esther's self-scolding works to distract or distance her from reflection or emotion by reinforcing the present and practical. For example, Esther employs her voice and her keys to turn her mind from "shadowy speculations" about her mother and her past (6.103). Instructing herself that it

is “not for me to muse over bygones, but to act with a cheerful spirit and a grateful heart,” Esther rings her keys as an accompaniment to her admonishment, “Esther, Esther, Esther! Duty, my dear!” (6.103). Her domestic duties, made more present by the sound of the keys, draw Esther out of her reverie and instruct her to keep her focus on service to those around her.

The above instances of self-scolding demonstrate how this educational process teaches Esther to perform the novel’s (and her) understanding of femininity by teaching her to perform the domestic, familial service which makes and marks the feminine woman. Yet Esther’s self-instruction in womanhood extends beyond this practical definition of femininity into an effort to school her character, her very identity, into her perception of womanhood. Before exploring how her self-scolding enacts this education in feminine identity, I want to briefly draw attention to Esther’s emphasis on selflessness or self-effacement as the dominant element of her concept of femininity. Her birthday resolution, which draws on her godmother’s condemnation of her as “degraded from the first” by the circumstances of her birth, reveals how Esther comes to believe that self-denial or repression are the only means of achieving not only love, but femininity (3.30). Furthermore, her godmother’s identification of “submission, self-denial, diligent work” as Esther’s proper lot contributes to Esther’s conviction that self-denial is best achieved through “work” (3.30). As Zwerdling points out, Esther is so damaged by her godmother’s neglect and shaming that she “envisages love as a reward for strenuous effort . . . not as something that may come naturally” (430). Esther’s anxiety to serve Jardyce and the family of Bleak House epitomizes the knotting together of self-denial,

domestic service, and desire for love that characterizes her sense of her growing femininity: "[M]y thought was how could I ever be busy enough, how could I ever be good enough, how in my little way could I ever hope to be forgetful enough of myself, devoted enough to him, and useful enough to others, to show him how I blessed and honored him" (43.686). In this formulation, Esther believes her "busy" home usefulness will enable her to "be forgetful enough of myself" so that she can embody self-forgetting, self-denying femininity.

Esther's self-instruction in femininity thus becomes a matter of character training, and her scolding registers this component of Esther's self-education in its capacity to rebuke and retrain that which runs counter to her ideal of useful, selfless contentment. For example, Esther scolds to keep herself from dwelling on Lady Dedlock: "I felt the whole state of my mind in reference to her to be weak and unreasonable; and I remonstrated with myself about it as much as I could" (23.366). Similarly, upon leaving Greenleaf, Esther forces herself to "sob less, and . . . be quiet by saying very often, 'Esther, now, you really must! This will not do!'" (3.42). The efficacy of her scolding, "I cheered myself up pretty well at last," illustrates that by admonishing her crying self as a separate, wayward entity, Esther can train herself in correct, cheerful behavior (3.42). As these examples show, Esther's scolding serves as a means of schooling her emotions and desires by enabling her to separate herself from specific emotions or reflections. By training her to conquer or repress unwanted emotions, Esther's scolding aids her self-education in womanly self-denial.

However, this schooling in self-denial and affection becomes, in Esther's obsessive understanding, something more than instruction in conventional femininity. The two instances in which Esther performs her self-scolding in front of a mirror represent the speech-act as radically dividing Esther's identity in their attempt to suppress certain emotions or thoughts and depict her self-education shading into a distortion of education's ability to inculcate femininity. In the first instance, the mirror both amplifies and naturalizes Esther's radical self-division by placing her self-division on par with seeing a version of oneself in the mirror: "For I naturally said, 'Esther! You to be low-spirited. *You!*' . . . for I--yes, I really did see myself in the glass, almost crying. 'As if you had anything to make you unhappy, instead of everything to make you happy, you ungrateful heart!'" (17.274). Though she casts this self-division as "natural," Esther's acknowledgment that "I really did see myself" belies her vehement identification of that face as a "*you*" who is not "I" and must be suppressed for its ingratitude.

The second instance of Esther's self-scolding before a mirror is precipitated by the major crisis of Esther's growing-up, Jarndyce's proposal of marriage. Her scolding here attempts to teach Esther to perform what she believes to be not just her duty as a woman, but her only option as Esther.[66] Crying because she feels "as if something for which there was no name or distinct idea were indefinitely lost to me," Esther approaches her mirror (44.692). Finding her face marred by tears, Esther speaks aloud to it: "I said,

[66] Esther's consideration of the proposal twice references her changed appearance and her bastardy, "my disfigurement, and my inheritance of shame" (44.692) and "the deep traces of my illness and the circumstances of my birth" (44.693), suggesting--along with her burning of the nosegay from Woodcourt--a belief that Jarndyce is the only man who could ever want to marry her.

'O Esther, Esther, can that be you!' I am afraid the face in the glass was going to cry again at this reproach, but I held up my finger at it, and it stopped" (44.692). Esther's scolding here casts her reflected self as a separate entity, no longer "myself" but "the face" or "it," revealing the extent of her self-alienation. Whereas Lowry Pei reads these mirror scenes as Esther's encounters with her "unknown self" (148), the repressed "Other within Esther which her conscious mind cannot reach," my reading proposes that Esther's scolding has no trouble reaching and knowing this "other" self, but deliberately makes the knowable self an alien "other" in order to educate and thus eradicate it (151). Esther's self-scolding, which had worked to instruct and so reinforce her feminine identity by training her for affectionate, domestic service to her familial "circle of duty" becomes a tool of self-suppression, with which Esther does damage to her identity. Looking in the mirror at herself in these instances, Esther is both threatened and threatening, a self-contained double of her mother who "loses herself in deep thought . . . until she sees her own brooding face in the opposite glass, and a pair of black eyes curiously observing her," the eyes of a woman who would destroy her (12.192).

Just as Esther's self-alienation and self-suppression at her looking-glass connects her to her mother and to Hortense, suggesting the threat inherent in her self-schooling, so does her use of the housekeeping keys as totems during her scoldings connect her to Hortense, who is threatened with the ringing of prison keys by Tulkinghorn. When put in the service of Esther's efforts at self-suppression, her housekeeping keys' "merry little peal" threatens to drown out Esther's voice (38.609). For example, during a *tête-à-tête* with Jarndyce, she feels herself starting to cry, a show of gratitude forbidden by her

guardian, and so she "taxe[s] . . . myself with it, 'Esther, now, you know you are!' . . . . [and] I gave the housekeeping keys the least shake in the world as a reminder to myself" (8.120). Here, in the second of two consecutive scoldings during this interview with Jarndyce, Esther's self-address diminishes, and instead the keys effect Esther's holding back of the tears rising to "choke" her. The ringing keys do not merely echo Esther's scolding voice; they become that voice. This subordination of Esther's voice to the sound of her noisy keys signals her almost total assimilation into her role as housekeeper of Bleak House, signaled in the proliferation of nicknames among which her "own name soon [becomes] . . . quite lost" (8.121). In addition to underscoring Esther's self-suppression into the mistress of Bleak House, her ever-present keys connect her to Inspector Bucket, who brandishes the keys to the Deadlock estate and Tulkinghorn's chambers, as well as to the imprisonment with which Tulkinghorn threatens Hortense. This connection with policing and imprisonment evokes the carceral aspect of Esther's position within Bleak House, for Esther's repeated employment of her scoldings, and their increasing self-suppression, bespeaks a continuous need for self-monitoring and self-making. And as the woman makes the home through the domestic and affective service that draws to her a "circle of duty," so Esther's vigilance in terms of her own moral character and the instability which such watchfulness implies reinforces the unstable family unit of which she is the heart--a family structure that both reinforces and is reinforced by her attempt to learn and practice womanhood. As D.A. Miller has argued, Esther translates her own self-monitoring into her role as monitress of Bleak House and its family. In Miller's influential formulation, "Esther never ceases to earn her place, as

though, were she to do so, she might even at the end be displaced from it" (83). Esther's constant self-re-creation stabilizes the family structure that she so desires to join even as it entails a radical self-suppression which threatens the integrity of her individual self.

Esther's education thus suggests that an education which teaches a woman to perform femininity can be damaging to her individual identity even as the novel presents education as capable of cultivating such femininity. Esther's increasingly hysterical application of pedagogical strategies to the self-suppression she equates with feminine womanhood indicates that it is the feminine ideal, not the education, which poses the most significant threat to her identity. Her godmother's judgment, which brands Esther's psyche, produces Esther's fraught relationship to femininity in its assertion that Esther is damaged by a woman and because she will be a woman: "Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers. The time will come--and soon enough--when you will understand this better, and will feel it too, as no one save a woman can" (3.30). Esther's self-scolding retains a sense of her godmother's judgment in its continual approach to and fear of feminine womanhood, with its potential for transgressive affection, generating a cyclical model of identity and progress in which Esther is always in the same state of needing instruction. Thus, Esther's didactic scolding both enacts and disrupts *Bleak House*'s proto-detective narrative pattern of progress from ignorance to knowledge. Esther's self-instruction mirrors this narrative of linear progress in her increasing facility for womanly, domestic and affective service. However, as Helena Michie has found, "Esther is continually described unteleologically . . . . [As] the centering force, if not the center of the novel, she is the place of return" (204). Michie identifies these "returns" as

"the novel's many comings home," a reading that reinforces woman as the producer and perpetuator of family and home. Michie's emphasis on Esther as the center of these "comings home" further reinforces my reading of Esther as imprisoned in her desire to fulfill that womanly role.

Even in its equivocal representation of womanhood, Esther's narration positions education as capable of teaching femininity. Her and Ada's experience suggests that formal education teaches femininity by training the student in the knowledge and skills needed to perform her definitive service as well to appear ladylike in society. Moreover, the scolding that makes up Esther's self-education in and for the home dramatizes, by making into (self-) dialogue, the processes by which she instructs herself in femininity. Thus, as spectator of these dramatizations, as Michie has argued, "the reader is witnessing and participating in an act of self-construction" (200). Esther's narrative, with its didactic scoldings, thus functions as an example of female (self-) education. Yet Esther's narrative does not, ultimately, construct her as a model of female education or femininity. Her self-instruction's lack of outside influence skews it, just as her godmother's judgment perverts her self-perception as an individual and as a woman. Indeed, I would propose that the two are mutually influential: Esther's understanding of femininity as inherently damaged and damaging, especially in relation to her "inheritance of shame," breeds a compulsion to school herself in a performance of femininity that imperils her individual identity (44.692).

I conclude my readings of Esther's education by considering one final instance of her didactic self-scolding, one that functions intra-textually, between *Bleak House*'s

narrating and narrated Esthers.[67] Esther's narration not only documents her efforts to teach herself self-suppression, but enacts it, for when Esther calls attention to her narration she does so, paradoxically, in an attempt to shift attention away from herself both as narrator and as character. For example, she protests against narrating her own life, "It seems so curious to me to be obliged to write all this about myself! As if this narrative were the narrative of *my* life! But my little body will soon fall into the back-ground now," even as her emphasis on "*my* life" and "my . . . body" foregrounds her dual position as narrator and character (3.40). Significantly for my argument, this self-effacement is a marker of Esther's femininity. A contemporary reviewer in *The Spectator* epitomizes the association of self-effacement with femininity when he calls the "heroine of *Bleak House* . . . a model of unconscious goodness" and then revokes Esther's status as exemplar because "such a girl would not write her own memories" (924). *The Spectator*'s reviewer crucially associates feminine "goodness" with selflessness in its most literal terms, and his reading foregrounds the double-bind in which Esther's narrative puts her. If, as Zwerdling claims, "In allowing her to tell her own story, Dickens gives selflessness a voice," it is because of that very (very feminine) selflessness, a voice that attempts to erase itself (432).

Yet though she attempts such feminine erasure by submerging herself in lives of the loved ones she means to narrate, the fact of her narration undermines that effort: "I don't know how it is, I seem to be always writing about myself. I mean all the time to

[67] Malone identifies the "the illness that scars Esther's face as a visible sign" of the division between her "narrated 'I' and her narrating 'I'" (109). For a reading of the dual narrators implied in the division of Esther's narrative into the narrated story and the "writing-time story," see Kearns.

write about other people, and I try to think about myself as little as possible" (9.137). LuAnn Fletcher sums up arguments made by Hilary Schor, Audrey Jaffe, and Virginia Blain when she states, "[S]imply by writing about her experiences of others, and her sympathy with their feelings, Esther asserts her own identity" (79). Esther's narrative, then, both asserts her womanliness in its insistence on her reserve and selflessness, and, in that assertion, undercuts it, recapitulating the cyclicality of her self-scolding and thus her attempt to instruct herself in femininity.

Naturally, Esther attempts to suppress this unfeminine assertion as she does other perceived deviations, by scolding herself: "[W]hen I find myself coming into the story again, I am really vexed and say, 'Dear, dear, you tiresome little creature, I wish you wouldn't!' but it is all of no use" (9.137). Here the self-alienation of Esther's scolding takes on a new dimension, for not only does "good" Esther reprove "bad" Esther, but narrator-Esther also reproves character-Esther. Significantly, narrator-Esther's scolding of character-Esther for her presence in the narrative situates character-Esther's ideal position as outside of the text. Esther is thus forced to stay in the text, as narrator of a certain "portion of these pages," and enjoined to stay out of it (3.27). The resulting inside-outside position informs her halting, elliptical, obfuscating narrative, as Esther, both the narrator and a character, negotiates how a necessarily selfless woman can represent herself as such, how she can narrate a self that she attempts to alter, if not suppress, or at least "to think about . . . as little as possible" (9.137).

My reading of Esther's often infuriating narrative style argues that it illustrates the harmful impact of her understanding of femininity on her individual identity. Because she

has trained herself into a womanhood that is signaled through a selfless service which becomes self-alienation and self-suppression, Esther cannot forthrightly narrate what comes to be very much her story--the story that proves she is her mother's daughter. This strained narration reflects Esther's strained identity, one that has its roots in a self-education which attempts to fit individual Esther into a (distorted) type of femininity. *Hard Times* has been pronounced "a kind of appendage to *Bleak House*" in its taking up of *Bleak House*'s concern with the machinery of modern life and the stratification of social classes (Tracy 48). To this list of *Hard Times*'s and *Bleak House*'s shared concerns, I would add education and its ability to damage individual identity, especially feminine identity, for Louisa's example demonstrates how an externally imposed educational system can also strain the female learner's identity, distorting her performance of femininity and if not her narrative ability, her narratability.

## "I DON'T KNOW WHAT OTHER GIRLS KNOW": DISTORTED FEMININITY IN *HARD TIMES*

Whereas Esther's education in *Bleak House* works to make the institutional familial, Louisa's in *Hard Times* effectively makes the familial institutional. From her formal schooling, first as a day-boarder at a small, home-like school, run out of a home and mimicking a familial environment, and then at Greenleaf under the administration of the "two Miss Donnys, twins," who also attempted to give their boarding school a homey air, to her self-instruction within her home at Bleak House, Esther's education emphasizes woman's role as maker and sustainer of the middle-class home (3.39). The primarily affective and domestic instruction of *Bleak House* turns scientific in *Hard Times*, which subjects both "boys and girls" to a curriculum of "nothing but facts"

(1.1.9). Louisa's education, then, in contrast to Esther's, takes place within a home that has been turned into an educational factory. Within their "calculated, cast up, balanced, and proved house" with its "a lawn and garden and an infant avenue, all ruled straight like a botanical account book" (1.3.16-17), Louisa and her siblings spend their days not in a playroom and parlor--or even a schoolroom--but in the "lecture-room" (1.3.16) and the "children's study" (1.4.26). Moreover, Louisa's education, built upon Gradgrind's belief that "reason is . . . the only faculty to which education should be addressed," leaves as much room for the domestic and affective skills and knowledge that define femininity as her home does for imagination and beauty (1.4.24). Though Louisa's and Esther's educations are not commensurate in terms of the pedagogical practices employed and subjects learned, their similar concern with learning's impact on the individual, especially the violence done by a training that attempts to fit the individual to a type, as well as their shared domestic, familial setting, makes reading them with and against each other illuminative of each novel's depiction of female education's potentials and perils.

The following readings of *Hard Times* emphasize the novel's anxiety about education's potential to stunt and derange femininity when it forces upon women exclusively rational, intellectual instruction "without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections" (1.8.52). In contrast to Esther, whose education remains benign, if not helpful, in training her femininity, Louisa Gradgrind demonstrates that an exclusively rational, technical education threatens not only the individual girl's feminine identity, but also the social system in which the individual (and gender) is enmeshed. Trained out of home usefulness and womanly affection, Louisa is unable to foster a

"circle of duty," through which woman perpetuates her home and family and which, in turn, maintains wider society. In order to track how learning unfits Louisa for femininity and how that unfitness represents a threat to the society and narrative of *Hard Times*, the following section begins by identifying the novel's local articulation of affectionate, home-useful (to paraphrase Yonge's ideal of "home usefulness") femininity in Sissy Jupe. It then examines Louisa's education and its results in order to register how her learning constructs Louisa's femininity as distorted and Louisa as transgressive. Through the figure of Louisa, this section explores how the incompatibility between femininity and learning depicts education as potentially harmful to woman.

Like *Bleak House* before it, *Hard Times* locates femininity in a woman's domestic service, her affection, and her ability to produce and perpetuate the middle-class family. And this femininity is itself primarily located in Sissy Jupe, the novel's scholar of the "wisdom of the Heart" (3.1.217). "Plainly dressed, very quiet, very pretty," with a face "innocent and youthful" (3.2.223), Sissy's "childlike ingenuousness . . . modest fearlessness. . . truthfulness which put all artifice aside" and "her entire forgetfulness of herself" reads like a catalog of Dickensian femininity (3.2.224-25). The novel's repeated characterization of Sissy as "childlike" emphasizes an added component of *Hard Times*'s definition of femininity, an association with imagination as a source of feminine affection and sympathy.[68] Indeed, imagination and affection enable Sissy to preserve her family.

[68] Childhood further represents a state outside of the novel's economic system. As a child, Sissy is not put to work in the mills, nor can she carry the economic value of woman in which, as Starr indicates, "growing value is signified through her burgeoning sexuality" (325). The qualities of sympathy, gentleness, and usefulness that characterize Sissy as "childish" preclude her entrance into commodified sexuality, and instead mark her firmly for the domestic, familial service that the novel identifies with femininity.

Her reading to her father "about the Fairies, . . . and the Dwarf, and the Hunchback, and the Genies" signals Sissy's close tie to the imaginative realms of childhood denied to the Gradgrinds in their ignorance of Tom Thumb and Peter Piper (1.7.52). Moreover, Sissy's fantasy reading enables her to maintain herself and her father as a family, if only in her heart. First, in a parallel of Esther's and Ada's love-quickened understanding, Sissy's imaginative knowledge opens to her knowledge of her father. "Nobody understands him as I do; nobody knows him as I do" (1.9.61), she claims, and this exclusive knowledge translates to practical service, teaching her how best to serve as "his comfort in everything" (1.9.62). Her association with imagination enables Sissy to serve and comfort her father because it teaches her to sympathetically comprehend him. The service and comfort Sissy renders to her father make her much like Ruskin's ideal queen, able to carry home anywhere circus life takes them.[69] Sissy's imaginative, affectionate service also preserves her family in a more concrete way by physically keeping her father beside her. Her reading to him has "kept him, many times, from what did him real harm," presumably by keeping him at home to find out "whether the sultan would let the lady go on with the story" instead of going out to drink or gamble (1.9.62). That Sissy's instrument of right influence over her father should be what Gradgrind calls the "wrong books"--the *Arabian Nights* and other fairytales--associates the definitive feminine duty of perpetuating home through affectionate service with imagination (1.9.62).

[69] Ruskin claims, "[W]herever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head; the glowworm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot: but home is yet wherever she is" (99).

Sissy's feminine power of home-creation extends from her natural family to her foster family, the Gradgrinds. Feminine service enters the Gradgrind home, through Sissy, as incomprehensible and unnamable, registered as an uncategorizable "something" by both Mrs. Gradgrind and Mr. Gradgrind. Mrs. Gradgrind finds "something--not an ology at all--that your father has missed, or forgotten" (2.9.194) in Sissy, and Gradgrind similarly concludes that there is "something in this girl which could hardly be set forth in a tabular form" (1.14.92). Though unnamed, Sissy's femininity enables her to make the Gradgrind house a home. Her domestic skills transform the formerly grim, practical rooms into "cheerful" spaces with a "look of welcome" (3.1.215). Her affection and sympathy also transform the Gradgrind family, particularly young Jane. Under Sissy's influence Jane shows "a better and brighter face" (2.9.193) than she had previously, when it was constantly smudged "with slate pencil and tears. . . over vulgar fractions" (1.4.26). Jane explicitly credits Sissy's sisterly example with the "beaming face" she presents, telling Louisa, "I am sure it must be Sissy's doing" (3.1.215).

Moreover, Sissy's feminine influence models selfless service for a family trained in self interest. Louisa, for example, praises Sissy for being "more useful to my mother, and more pleasant with her than I can ever be" (1.9.59). Gradgrind also stresses her usefulness, praising Sissy for the good work she has done as Mrs. Gradgrind's nurse: "You are useful to Mrs. Gradgrind, and (in a generally pervading way) you are serviceable to the family also" (1.14.92). Her tenure in the Gradgrind home not only ensconces Sissy as a model of femininity, "slowly working . . . by mere love and gratitude," but also reveals the power of that femininity to construct home around her, for

her influence turns the Gradgrind home from something like a boarding school to the site of a true family (3.1.218).[70]

As Sissy's transformation of the Gradgrind home demonstrates the power of the individual affectionate, home-useful woman, so her education, especially her resistance to Gradgrindian pedagogy, suggests the danger of that mechanical education which reduces each individual student to a cog in a factory, with children seated on an inclined plane reminiscent of a treadmill or conveyor belt producing discrete, standardized units of knowledge for an instructor, who, "along with some hundred and forty other schoolmasters, had been. . . turned at the same time, at the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs" (1.2.15). Though eventually subject to the "hail . . . [of] facts all day long" that comprises Gradgrind's efforts for a mass-produced education, Sissy does not enter upon this education completely ignorant (1.9.58). She has learned the "three Rs" from her father, who "has been picking up a bit of reading for her, here--and a bit of writing for her, there--and a bit of cyphering for her, somewhere else" (1.6.39). While the extent of her learning makes Sissy somewhat extraordinary in the context of the circus folk, the process of her education makes her extraordinary in the context of Gradgrind's Coketown, for she has been taught out of and through the love that sustains her family by keeping Sissy and her father "never asunder" (1.6.38).

[70] The novel subtly reinforces this characterization of Sissy as truly feminine through its repeated designations of her as a wife in a novel fraught with failed marriages. The education commissioner takes Sissy's future husband for granted when he questions whether she "would carpet your room--or your husband's room, if you were a grown woman . . . with representations of flowers" (1.2.13). Sleary speaks of Sissy's adulthood and marriage as if they were one and the same--and both inevitable: "when you're grown up and married" (1.6.45). The novel's final vignette brings to fruition these visions of her future marriage and motherhood in its presentation of her as "happy Sissy" with her "happy children" (3.9.287).

Yet the affection that motivates Sissy's learning ultimately hinders her progress at school, for it precludes her entrance into the Gradgrindian view of human nature. Instead, Sissy remains concerned with the kinds of individual human experience that fairy tales deal in. Her answers to questions on "National Prosperity" and "Political Economy" emphasize a concern for the individuals represented by statistics. Faced with questions that reduce people to "figures," Sissy responds by imaginatively projecting herself and her sympathy into them. She answers M'Choakumchild's hypothetical example of the schoolroom as "a prosperous nation" with her inability to "know whether it was a prosperous nation or not, and whether I was in a thriving state or not, unless I knew who had got the money, and whether any of it was mine" (1.9.60). Sissy's other wrong answers--that "it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million" (1.9.60) and that the percentage of people "drowned or burnt to death" among all people who sailed on long voyages in a given time comes to "nothing. . . to the relations and friends of the people who were killed"--similarly refute Gradgrind's first principles of reason and self-interest by imaginatively associating herself with others and recognizing the individual within the group (1.9.61). Sissy's concern for the individual in these examples draws attention to the brutality of an educational system that reduces tragedies to object lessons and individual students to mere "vessels" to be filled equally, regardless of their individual capacities (1.1.9). Like her deployment of her earlier imaginative learning to preserve her family, Sissy's incompatibility with the methods and goals of Gradgrindian education signals her

femininity. Moreover, it defines that femininity as employing knowledge of individuals, gained through affection, to link individuals together, forming the family.

Unlike Sissy, who has "picked up" her education all across the country through lessons and life experience, Louisa has, like many middle- and upper-class girls of the 1850s, been educated at her father's school and at home. Yet Louisa learns almost nothing about the domestic, affective service with which *Hard Times* associates womanhood. Instead, Louisa's education conditions her to view the world in terms of "problems that could be demonstrated, and realities that could be grasped" (1.15.100). It is no wonder, then, that she enters the novel as Gradgrind's "own metallurgical Louisa" (1.3.18), almost as a specimen of the family's "cabinets in various departments of science" (1.3.17). Taught to think and act only on "the strong dispassionate ground of reason and calculation," Louisa lacks the affectionate interest in individuals that *Hard Times* locates at the heart of femininity (1.15.96). Louisa's rational, technical education blocks any tendency toward the type of concern shown in Sissy's answers above by training her to view mankind in the aggregate, as populations or proportions.She has been taught to consider the workers of Coketown in terms of political economy and entomology:

> [S]he knew of their existence by hundreds and by thousands. She knew what results in work a given number of them would produce in a given space of time. She knew them in crowds passing to and from their nests, like ants or beetles. But she knew from her reading infinitely more of the ways of toiling insects than of these toiling men and women. (2.6.155)

Louisa's education teaches her much about insect nature but nothing about human nature. It also teaches her to view Coketown's workers not as individuals but as "crowds" and to

value them in terms of their production. Louisa's claim that "I know nothing of them, men or women" demonstrates how her education actively opposes the sympathetic knowledge of others which defines femininity.

Kept from knowing her fellow human beings as individuals, Louisa also seems to be kept from knowing any human beings as friends or even schoolmates. Coketown's close, closed community gives the impression that, before Sissy, Louisa has barely spoken to anyone outside her family circle. Her queries--"what other proposal can have been made to *me*? Whom have I seen? Where have I been?"--state as much (1.15.100). Isolated physically as well as intellectually from others, Louisa has no means of combating Gradgrind's utilitarian concept of human nature beyond her own innate "disposition to believe of a wider and nobler humanity than she had ever heard of" (2.7.163). Her education's choking back of this disposition through its key-note, "Never wonder," produces a young woman who knows no one and is discouraged from learning about her fellow man through experience or through the imaginative means of literature. Without imagination and affection, in fact living in an environment that actively denies imagination and so stunts affection, Louisa has no frame for the domestic duties and familial affections that signify femininity.

Louisa's isolated childhood and strictly rational education stunt the innate femininity retained in her "disposition to believe of a wider and nobler humanity" (2.7.163). Instead, her education cultivates a young woman who is, in Jean Ferguson Carr's formulation, "Isolated in [the] . . . masculine realm" and thus "deprive[d] . . . of the usual feminine resources" that generate womanliness (170). *Hard Times* first registers

Louisa's stunted femininity in her lack of emotion. In contrast to Sissy, Louisa enters the novel as, if not emotionless, then numb. She replies to Gradgrind's rebukes with "an air of jaded sullenness" and remains unmoved by his display of paternal disappointment. No blush darkens her face and "no tear fell down her cheek," a marked contrast to Sissy, who is quick to tears and quicker to blush (1.3.19). Affectively, Louisa is as much an automaton as Thomas, who allows himself to be ordered about "like a machine" (1.3.19). Trained by Gradgrind to be "dispassionate" (1.15.96), Louisa becomes "hardened" (1.15.99) and "cold" (1.15.102, 2.2.127) to all but her brother Tom. This coldness signals the stunted nature of Louisa's femininity: she is more like a machine or metallurgical specimen than a woman.

As the connection between her "dispassionate" training and her "cold" demeanor suggests, Louisa's inability to inhabit her natural femininity results directly from the education that actively keeps from her "the usual feminine resources" of woman's knowledge and ways of knowing (Carr 170). The novel repeatedly designates her a product of Gradgrind's system, as when he commends her as "not impulsive. . . not romantic," telling her, "you have been so well-trained, and you do, I am happy to say, so much justice to the education you have received" (1.15.96). Similarly, Harthouse, "presenting her own image to her, slightly disguised as her brother," defines that image as unstable and stunted (2.7.168). He describes Tom/Louisa as rushing "into . . . extremes for himself, from the opposite extremes that have long been forced" and as the victim of

"a youth mistaken, a character misconceived, and abilities misdirected" (2.7.169).[71] Louisa's own assessments of her education reflect this sense of "misdirection" and distortion, especially in terms of the feminine elements of her "character . . . and abilities." She blames her rational training for "the frost and blight that have hardened and spoiled me" (2.12.209). Moreover, she represents her education as creating a lack, asking Gradgrind, "[W]hat have you done with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here" while violently clasping "both her hands upon her bosom" (2.12.208). Her preface to her confession that she has abandoned her husband, "Father, you have trained me from my cradle," casts the shadow of her education over her temptation to adultery and her plea for help, implicating it as the cause of her marital transgression (2.12.208).

Most powerfully, Louisa denounces her education by alleging that paternal neglect would have been more beneficial to her than Gradgrind's instruction: "[I]f only you had neglected me, what a much better and much happier creature I should have been this day" (2.12.209). Beyond neglect, Louisa positions blindness as better than--or a salvation from--the education that has deranged her character:

> [I]f I had been stone blind; if I had groped my way by sense of touch, and had been free, while I knew the shapes and surfaces of things, to exercise my fancy somewhat, in regard to them; I should have been a million times wiser, happier, more loving, more contented, more innocent and human in all good respects, then I am with the eyes I have. (2.12.209)

[71] "Forcing" in education was a consistent concern of Dickens's. The effect of Blimber's Academy on Paul Dombey, who dies, Mr. Toots, who becomes a sort of imbecile, and the rest of the students in *Dombey and Son* serves as an example of Dickens's representation of its consequences.

Just as outright neglect is preferable to a Gradgrindian education, blindness is preferable to senses and talents forced to work only on practical and technical lines. Louisa repeats this denunciation to Sissy, claiming, that "if I had been bereft of sense to this hour, and instead of being as learned as you think me, had to begin to acquire the simplest truths . . . I could not want a guide . . . more abjectly than I do" (3.1.220). Her yearning for senselessness reinforces Louisa's desire to abdicate her education while evoking a desire for an un-learned or pre-learned state. Louisa's doubled designation of ignorance and disability as more truly beneficial than her factual training signals her recognition that her education not only disabled her, but dominates and defines her. Its influence and effects have so overwhelmed Louisa that she can only imagine freedom from it in blindness, neglect, and senselessness.

In addition to drawing attention to her tendency toward self-mutilation,[72] Louisa's repudiation of her education through visions of neglect and disability poses imagination, or fancy, as the principal means of cultivating the femininity and sympathy she lacks. According to Louisa, Gradgrind has, by outlawing fancy and wonder, "robbed me. . . [of] my refuge from what is sordid and bad in the real things around me, my school in which I should have learned to be more humble and more trusting with them, and to hope in my little sphere to make them better" (2.12.209). Louisa's complaint seconds the novel's association of imagination with woman's "circle of duty" in its identification of fancy as

[72] See, for example, her early comment to Tom about cutting out a portion of her cheek with his penknife (1.4.27) and her vision of an "anatomist . . . strik[ing] his knife into the secrets of my soul" (2.12.210). *Hard Time*'s repeated associations of Louisa with fire, such as her comparison to "a fire with nothing to burn" (1.3.19), the "wild, dilating fire" in her eyes (2.12.211), and her warning that "Fire bursts out!" (1.15.99), similarly signal this self-destructive tendency.

that which would enable Louisa to use her "little sphere" to "make . . . better" the world around her. Additionally, Carr's reading of Louisa as robbed of maternal influence and feminine ways of knowing through Gradgrind's aggressively masculine education usefully glosses Louisa's claim here. Her training under Gradgrind leaves Louisa with "nothing to fall back upon, that girls usually fall back upon" and her mother proves unable or unwilling to fill this lack (2.3.135).[73] Louisa's complaint epitomizes the harm her education does to her, as an individual and as a woman: it offers her neither intellectual nor affective support ("something to fall back upon") as she leaves the schoolroom and enters womanhood. Unsupported and unhappy, Louisa represents herself as poisoned by what she has learned and "regretting, what I have not learned" (2.12.210).

Gradgrind's eventual "doubt whether I have been quite right in the manner of her education" (3.3.233) and his acknowledgment that Louisa's character and "qualities . . . have been harshly neglected, and--and a little perverted" by his regime second Louisa's self-assessment (3.3.234). Ann Humphreys reads this acknowledgment as merely a screen by Gradgrind to enact a marital separation "entirely contrary to legal definitions of separation and attitudes that underlay the law" between Louisa and Bounderby (184). I argue that Gradgrind's assessment is a significant admission of the harmful effects of a rational, masculine education on developing womanhood Gradgrind's solution, to "leave her [Louisa] to her better nature for a while--and to encourage it to develop itself by tenderness and consideration" further underscores my reading by making Louisa's

[73] This concept of girls and women having "nothing to fall back upon" after finishing their formal education and before (or in lieu of) marriage was often invoked in the 1850s, notably in Grey's and Shirreff's *Thoughts on Self-Culture* and Tilt's *Elements of Health.*

feminine development the goal of the separation (3.3.234). That such a development will best occur through "a period of repose and reflection" suggests a complete release from study as well as from the factual, rational worldview animating and animated by such study. The imputation that only a cessation of her education can ameliorate or restore Louisa's character (in both the private and public senses) identifies her education as the primary cause of her distorted, damaged femininity.

The education that has "neglected" and "perverted" Louisa's feminine "qualities" poisons her nature and thus inhibits her capacity for the service and affection that make and mark femininity. Louisa's stunted womanhood is most evident, and most threatening, in the "general incompatibility between Louisa, and. . . almost all the relations in which" she exists (3.3.234). Under Gradgrind's regime, familial relationships--frequently positioned by Victorian educational and gender ideology as the training ground for marital and maternal facility--are either eluded or distorted. Without fond memories of her mechanical, intellectual upbringing, Louisa has "no inducements to go back" to visit her family after her marriage (2.9.191). Her lack of familial ties compounds her lack of womanly sentiment, and she shrinks from visiting her siblings because she feels "herself all unfit for" interacting with "young people" (2.9.191).

Significantly, Louisa's view of herself as "all unfit" by her upbringing for her feminine role as daughter and sister hinges on her lack of the types of knowledge that enable a woman to produce and perpetuate the middle-class family home. Sissy's relationship with her father demonstrates that keeping a man tied to his family is every woman's duty--even the daughter of a traveling clown. Moreover, Sissy's use of fairy

tales to entertain her father positions imaginative and affective knowledge as a spring of this womanly home-making. Perhaps intuitively, Louisa senses both her sisterly duty to comfort and guide Tom and her "unfitness" for it:

> [H]ow unfortunate it is for me that I can't reconcile you to home better than I am able to do. I don't know what other girls know. I can't play to you, or sing to you. I can't talk to you so as to lighten your mind, for I never see any amusing sights or read any amusing books that it would be a pleasure or relief for you to talk about, when you are tired. (1.8.54-55)

Lacking the kinds of knowledge that will "lighten" Tom's mind, Louisa is unable to "reconcile [him] . . . to home" and to his future prospects. In short, Louisa cannot offer Tom the "pleasure or relief" that will keep him from what will to him "real harm" because she lacks aesthetic and affective knowledge. Gradgrind's insistence on reason and utility as the only means of thinking and interacting cripple the feminine influence necessary to hold the family together by "reconciling" its members to it. Ultimately, Louisa's education, and its domination of all aspects of her life, incapacitates her for feminine, familial service. She cannot fulfill her sisterly, feminine role in the house because, as she says, "I don't know what other girls know" (1.8.54).

Full of facts but ignorant of "what other girls know," Louisa embodies education's capacity to disrupt the natural progress of the individual female from girl to domestic, sympathetic woman. In its disruption of the individual's feminine maturation, Louisa's education further expresses education's capacity to disrupt womanhood As marriage customarily crowns a girl's progress to adulthood, serving as the proof of her femininity, so Louisa's marriage exemplifies the disruptive effects of the unfeminine, educated woman on the family and society. Humphreys claims that by the time of

Louisa's marriage, the novel has generated a critical interest in marriage through Stephen Blackpool, for "Stephen's desire to get out of a bad marriage invites us to look at all the marriages in the text" (181). I argue that this looking in itself undermines marriage in the novel, making Louisa's fall both sensational and unsurprising, depicting her perverted femininity as transgressive but also as the inevitable outcome of her education.

*Hard Times* implicates Louisa's education as the cause of her marital failure by suggesting that it conditions Louisa to accept Bounderby's proposal even though her "better nature" recoils from him (3.3.234). Gradgrind's preface to Bounderby's offer, "Bounderby has informed me that he has long watched your progress with particular interest and pleasure," presents the proposal as an extension--if not the end--of Louisa's (primarily educational) "progress" (1.15.96). Gradgrind's request that Louisa make her decision by "confining yourself rigidly to fact" again situates the proposal squarely within the realm of her upbringing (1.15.98). Consequently, Louisa's acquiescence rings more of a lesson than an acceptance: "Mr. Bounderby . . . asks me to marry him. The question I have to ask myself is, shall I marry him? That is so father, is it not? You have told me so father, have you not?" (1.15.100). Her answer, that "since Mr. Bounderby likes to take me thus, I am satisfied to accept his proposal" also echoes the Gradgrind schoolroom in its approximation of the mathematical proof system based on conditional ("if then") statements (1.15.100). Mrs. Gradgrind's blessing, "I hope you may now turn all your ological studies to good account," solidifies this construction of her marriage as an extension of her Gradgrindian education, for it positions marriage as merely another

sphere in which to practice the "studies" on which Louisa's existence has centered (1.15.101).

Like Mrs. Gradgrind, who envisions Louisa's marriage as an arena for demonstrating her knowledge instead of Louisa's education as a useful preparation for marriage, Bounderby views his union with Louisa not primarily as his entree into domestic bliss, but in terms of the social value she represents. Louisa's education is a commodity to be traded upon, as evinced by his continued designation of her as "Tom Gradgrind's eldest daughter" after their marriage (2.2.128). By refusing to call her "Mrs. Bounderby," Bounderby foregrounds Louisa's intellectual pedigree as her most salient quality. Furthermore, his description of her as containing "lots of expensive knowledge," suggests a vision of Louisa less as a wife and more as a governess (2.2.128). The image of the governess is particularly apt here, as the governess represents to mid-Victorian audiences "expensive knowledge" and the high socio-economic status necessary to employ her. Schor's argument that Louisa's "father's system has left her viewing herself only as a commodity best exchanged for the good of others" speaks to this view of Louisa as governess while also evoking the dehumanizing tendencies of Gradgrind's education (80). Tom's praise of Louisa as a "capital girl" reinforces this valuation of Louisa as a good, a marker of her father's principles and her husband's status (1.14.95).[74]

[74] The novel repeatedly characterizes the products of Gradgrind's educational regime as inhuman. In addition to the designation of his students as "vessels" (1.1.9) and "pitchers" (1.2.10), the descriptions of the school children and the Gradgrinds as "models" takes on an inhuman cast when Tom describes Sissy as "getting as pale as wax" (1.8.54). Tom's description of Louisa as "crammed with all sorts of dry bones and sawdust" equates her with a doll or milliner's form (2.3.135). Louisa calls herself a "creature" (2.12.209), and Tom is characterized as "a machine" (1.3.19), "a mule" (1.8.55), and a primate (or African) when he appears in blackface in Sleary's troupe with hands that "look. . . like the hands of a monkey" (3.7.274).

If Bounderby's nomenclature subtly positions his wife as the governess, then their bleak marital home reveals the couple to be loveless and incompatible. The two-part description of the drawing-room, "Cold and comfortless, boastfully and doggedly rich," reads like a description of first Louisa and then Bounderby, with the tenuousness of their marriage signaled by the weak, silent link of the comma. The pervasive discomfort of their marital home embodies Louisa's discomfort in the marriage. Furthermore, the cheerless and comfortless atmosphere of the Bounderby home metonymically illustrates Louisa's lack of femininity in the place most associated with it. *Hard Times* associates feminine womanhood with the home through Sissy's role as the "good fairy in his house" (3.7.267) and Rachel's bringing of "quiet and peace," as well as order, a curtain, and other homey items to Stephen's room (1.13.83). Louisa Bounderby's drawing room, like Louisa Gradgrind's childhood home, displays her stunted femininity, "unsoftened and unrelieved by the least trace of any womanly occupation" (2.2.127).

The lack of "womanly occupation" evident in Louisa's home extends beyond the decor. Though her education prepares Louisa to accept Bounderby's proposal, it does not prepare her for the duties she enters into as Bounderby's wife. Instead, her marriage reanimates the emotions and sentiments suppressed by Gradgrind's training. She explains, "When I was irrevocably married, there rose up into rebellion against the tie, the old strife, made fiercer by all those causes of disparity which arise out of our two individual natures, and which no general laws shall ever rule or state for me" (2.12.210). Louisa's experience as Bounderby's wife calls out her natural disposition to find wanting the "general laws," rules, and statements of her education as blocking her from

cultivating her home-useful, affectionate femininity. It also leads Louisa to one moment of definite self-knowledge, significant in the context of her general affective ignorance. She may not know if she loves Harthouse, but she can unambiguously define Bounderby as "the husband whom I am now sure that I hate" (2.12.209). Thus, even before Louisa's aborted adultery, her marriage is threatened. Louisa's fall begins before she meets Harthouse because it is the inevitable result of a domestically and emotionally deficient woman marrying a man whom she hates and for whom she has no respect.

If Louisa's marriage generates the scandal of her temptation to adultery and the dissolution of her marriage, it also fuels the novel's other scandal: Tom's robbery. Tom's crime and Louisa's indirect role in it further illustrate how the education that has perverted Louisa's femininity destabilizes middle-class familial institutions. Louisa's marriage does not directly catalyze Tom's larceny and duplicity, but her marriage-of-Tom's-convenience abets the dissolute self-interest[75] that, to Tom, necessitates and justifies his actions. In Tom's eyes, Louisa's marriage functions solely for his benefit. For example, when Tom boasts to Harthouse that he is responsible for Louisa's marriage, he depicts it as primarily a change for him: "[N]ot that it was altogether so important to her as it was to me. . . because my liberty and comfort, and perhaps my getting on, depended on it" (2.3.134). Tom seems to miss the fact that Louisa trades her "liberty and comfort" for his, especially as he falls deeper into debt and cannot depend on Louisa to supply him with Bounderby's money. Louisa's inability--or refusal--to continue paying Tom's debts

[75] The novel notes of Tom that "time. . . exercised him diligently in his calculations relative to number one" (1.14.91).

presumably leads to his robbery of Bounderby's bank. Tom's manipulations reveal that Louisa's marriage is not founded upon romantic love but upon fraternal love.

Moreover, Tom's manipulations expose the capacity for perversion in Gradgrind's pedagogy through their proof that when utilitarian self-interest invades familial relationships, those relationships become mere transactions. Because Louisa, not knowing what other girls know, cannot rightly influence him, Tom gains influence over and through her. His reconciliation to working for Bounderby, that "I had better go where I can take with me some advantage of your influence, then where I should lose it altogether," removes Louisa's feminine influence from its proper domestic sphere and applies it to the masculine sphere of business (1.8.56). This turning of Louisa's womanly home "influence" into a business advantage echoes the broader perversion of her feminine nature through Gradgrind's practical education, the culmination of which lies in her flight from her marriage.

As suggested above, Louisa's elopement serves as the physical manifestation of her mental rebellion. Nevertheless, as an outward sign, it enacts the wreck of her marriage and, more importantly, "the wreck of her whole life" (3.1.216). Abandoning her marital home aligns Louisa with Steven Blackpool's wife, the novel's truly fallen woman.[76] Yet though Louisa's flight condemns her as an unfaithful wife, it also absolves her of adulterous intentions, for she does not escape with Harthouse--she escapes from

[76] Louisa has already been obliquely associated with Mrs. Blackpool through Harthouse's idle imagination of Louisa as a "Gorgon" (2.7.163). Like the Gorgon, Mrs. Blackpool appears with dirty, tangled mass of hair that may well resemble snakes and petrifies those who look upon her with shame so that her husband must throw "a covering over her; as if his hands were not enough to hide her, even in the darkness" (1.10.70).

him. She promises to join him in order to evade him, explaining later that she "could release myself from his presence by no other means" (2.12.211). Thus, her elopement leaves Louisa in a moral ambivalence that disbars the novel from directly identifying her with either fallen Mrs. Blackpool or feminine Sissy. Neither the "good fairy" (3.7.267) nor the "degraded. . . wretch" (3.9.287), Louisa occupies an ambivalent position that unsettles the institution of marriage as much as her own marriage to Bounderby.

Louisa's failed adultery and failed marriage, both effects of the damage done her femininity by her education, prevent her from achieving full womanhood. Louisa's inability to align with the conventional morality that sanctions and is upheld by marriage is signaled in her lack of knowledge: "I do not know that I am sorry, I do not know that I am ashamed, I do not know that I am degraded in my own esteem" (2.12.211). Though Louisa associates these moral judgments with her situation, she is unable to definitively apply them to herself. It is this exemption-by-ignorance that Retan sees as "question[ing] the Victorian code of feminine behavior" (190) and, I would add, undermining the institution of marriage that depends upon that code of behavior. However, her ultimate avoidance of adultery and the fact that her temptation is as much the result of the education forced upon her as of her own inclination shield Louisa from the condemnation heaped on Blackpool's wife.[77] Instead, Louisa can be rehabilitated into womanliness through Sissy's tuition and example.

[77] Throughout, the novel depicts utilitarian education not as an active pursuit but as a force acting upon passive individuals, as evinced in the repeated metaphor of education as "vessels . . . ready to have . . . facts poured into them" (1.1.9), Bitzer's characterization of himself as an item "made in the . . . market" of his schooling (3.8.278), and the novel's use of "cram" to mean education or instruction (1.7.49, 2.2.128). In the

The extent of this rehabilitation becomes clear in the novel's final vignettes, which spin out "into futurity" (3.9.285). A softened Louisa serves as medium for these visions of the characters' later lives, for as the narrative, seeing her "watching the fire as in days of yore, though with a gentler and a humbler face," wonders, "How much of the future might arise before *her* vision?" (3.9.287). If, as Warrington Winters claims, Louisa's childhood watching of the fire shows her "the potential which her education has suppressed," her realized feminine potential at the end of the novel enables her to see the future (224). Freedom to wonder and Sissy's help transform the "creature" who wished to be blinded into a woman imbued with second sight (2.12.209).

Even as the novel installs Louisa at the hearth, watching, it does not enshrine her there. The final chapter offers a vision of Louisa as truly feminine, "herself again a wife--a mother--lovingly watchful of her children," only to immediately revoke it: "Did Louisa see this? Such a thing was never to be" (3.9.287). Louisa remains in the ambiguous position of being "not perfectly reconcilable with . . . the domestic hearth" but still associated with home and family through her materteral relationship to Sissy's family (3.2.226). With "happy Sissy's happy children loving her; all children loving her," Louisa comes to the threshold of domestic femininity (3.9.287). Yet though Louisa becomes a scholar of "childish lore," *Hard Times* refuses to bring her fully from the margins of family and society (3.9.287). Humphreys claims that "the inexplicable harshness" of Louisa's conclusion "indicates . . . that there is some force in Louisa that must be

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light of this forcing, Louisa cannot be wholly condemned for the results of a belief system enacted upon her and against which she had attempted to struggle.

suppressed, even punished," and this chapter's arguments about *Hard Times* have identified that force as Louisa's excessively rational education and the stunted femininity it produces (191 n. 22).[78] A threat to the order of marriage and family through her inability to matriculate into true feminine adult roles, the (mis)educated woman cannot be fully integrated into feminine womanhood through them, thus remaining liminal and ever potentially transgressive.

Louisa's final position as Mother Goose but not a mother leaves her on the margins of femininity and the domestic family and thus on the margins of the novel. She becomes simultaneously a surrogate narrator, the medium for the novel's concluding visions of its main characters, and unnarratable, for, as Humphreys notes, after her elopement, Louisa's "story essentially disappears from the text" (186). Louisa's narrative thus mirrors Esther's inside-outside relationship to her narration of *Bleak House*. However, *Hard Time*'s narrative of Louisa also inverts Esther's narrative of *Bleak House.* While Esther's womanhood is challenged by her narrative because her personal definition of femininity involves a self-suppression incompatible with the task of recounting her individual life, Louisa's distorted femininity challenges traditional narratives of female development because her liminal, potentially transgressive status disbars her from the patterns of familial and marital life that effect the closure of novels, embodied for *Hard Times* in the novel's final vision of "happy Sissy."

[78] Cowles identifies both Louisa's marriage and her final, unmarried position as Dickens "punish[ing] . . . her for her inability to bridge gaps inherent in his own contradictory beliefs about women" (78). Starr calls her "a stunted character who ends badly," joining a group of scholars who read Louisa's end "as a punishment" (319).

This shared tension between narrative and femininity speaks to what a number of scholars, including Schor, identify as an "instability in the *representation* of women which . . . become[s] . . . an anxiety about the narrative *place* of women, a refusal of women to sit quietly in their narrative station" in Dickens's novels (21). My readings of Esther's scolding and Louisa's technical instruction have worked to uncover how education provokes the tensions and anxieties surrounding the "place of women" and their representation in *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*. Reading Louisa's and Esther's educations together emphasizes the ambiguity at the heart of Dickens's representations of female education: it has the potential to engender and reinforce or to disable and distort femininity. Through their narratives of a young woman's progress from the schoolroom to their husband's home, *Bleak House* and *Hard Times* articulate the incompatibility between intellectuality and femininity by dramatizing the type of education that can form womanhood and the type of femininity that can result from untempered rational, scientific instruction.

I contend that reading Esther's and Louisa's educations as dramatizations, as deliberate playings out of implications and consequences, best captures their didactic function in the novels. As examples of particular modes of training womanhood, Louisa's and Esther's progresses enable the novels to examine not only learning's impact on the individual woman, but also the implications of an ambivalent femininity which is neither wholly innate, because trainable, nor wholly constructed. *Bleak House*'s and *Hard Time*'s shared emphasis on the educated woman's position in reference to the home and the family indicate woman's social influence, her ability to make or undermine the middle-

class family which underpins all other social configurations (including the novel), as the texts' central area of concern with female education. In this reading of Esther and Louisa as dramatizations, *Bleak House*'s example of education's capacity to engender femininity and *Hard Time*'s presentation of education as distorting womanhood together represent female education as a central, but ultimately equivocal, power in mid-Victorian society.

## Chapter 4: "Quieter on the surface": Schooling the Female Mind and Body in Brontë's *Villette*

"I never asked to be made learned, and you compel me to feel very profoundly that learning is not happiness" (30.352). So says Lucy Snowe, the protagonist of Charlotte Brontë's last novel, *Villette* (1853). This repudiation of "learning," punctuated with a sweeping up of her books and dumping them on the floor "in a heap" at the feet of her instructor, characterizes education as neither natural nor useful to a woman's life: Lucy must "be *made* learned," and it does not bring her "happiness" (30.352, italics mine). Her frustrated rejection, which implies its obverse through its occurrence in the middle of a lesson (she is, in fact, being made learned), articulates an equivocal response to education for women reflected by the novel as a whole.

The previous chapter argued that Dickens's novels of the early 1850s, *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, dramatize female education's ambivalent potential, offering, respectively, an example of education's capacity to train and reinforce home-useful womanhood and a warning against its power to distort or disable femininity. As models of education's effects on women, these two novels illuminate mid-Victorian anxieties about woman's social power, her ability to make or undermine the home, the institution that underpins all other social configurations.

Published at almost the mid-point of *Bleak House*'s serial run, *Villette*[79] translates these concerns with the educated woman out of the sphere of family and society and into the realm of individual, lived experience. The following reading of *Villette* explore the

[79] *Villette* was published in three volumes in January 1853 by Smith, Elder and Co.

novel's presentation of the body as a legible index of the individual's character and mind, and therefore as a tool for control and determination. Primarily focusing on the narrator, Lucy Snowe, and the instruction and discipline to which she subjects mind and body alike, this chapter considers the body's involvement in the educational practices that impact the development of a female self. Though learning fuels Lucy's formation of a successful, independent individuality, *Villette* ultimately refuses to position her as a positive model of femininity. This refusal to present Lucy as a model suggests the novel's adherence to mid-Victorian perceptions of womanhood. Moreover, Lucy's achievement of independence through education, an independence that comes at the expense of familial and romantic ties, signals the influence of contemporary understanding of femininity as incompatible with intellectuality on the novel's presentations of female education. In order to ground my readings of education's effects on the female mind and body in the novel's concept of femininity, I begin with an examination of *Villette*'s representation of this incompatibility as well as its influence on Lucy's learning, teaching, and self-image.

## "[T]HE LIMITS PROPER TO MY SEX": LEARNING AND FEMININITY

Most of *Villette*'s narrative action takes place in or around a *pensionnat de demoiselles*, or girls' boarding school, but the novel employs this setting somewhat ironically, presenting female learning not as an ideal labor, but as a dangerous or futile undertaking. In fact, this section establishes the novel's consistent emphasis on learning and, especially, female interest or pride in learning as distracting a woman from her rightful concerns or distorting her mind and body through an undesirable, if not

transgressive, crossing of gender boundaries. Though the novel most plainly presents these beliefs through the dubious mouthpieces of M. Paul and Mme Beck, Lucy herself takes part in them, establishing that the perception of the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality is not merely a product of Catholic, continental biases, but an important component of *Villette*'s portrayal of womanhood.

For example, in an early formulation of the incompatibility, Lucy presents learning as inconsequential to the development of feminine womanhood. Her encounter with a former schoolfellow, Mrs. Leigh, excludes intellectual training from the process of turning a girl into a woman by drawing attention to Mrs. Leigh's mental inferiority and her superior femininity. Lucy identifies Mrs. Leigh as a girl with whom she had gone to school "when I was a girl of ten and she a young lady of sixteen" (5.44). Taken by itself, this age disparity merely represents the state of many day- and boarding-schools for girls in nineteenth-century England, which customarily accommodated girls of varying ages. However, Lucy's memory of her as "good-looking, but dull--in a lower class than mine," unmistakably portrays Mrs. Leigh as below Lucy in scholastic ability (5.44).

Lucy's description of Mrs. Leigh speaking "very bad French . . . with an incorrigibly bad accent, again forcibly reminding me of our school-days" insists on the characterization of this woman as Lucy's inferior, as the "unintellectual girl" she once was (5.44). Yet this "unintellectual girl" has become "a beautiful and kind-looking woman," the mother of "a pretty child," and clever Lucy has not (5.44). Lucy is not slow to draw a lesson from this outcome. In fact, she identifies marriage and motherhood as the vehicles of Mrs. Leigh's education for adulthood when she notes, with some surprise,

"What a beautiful and kind-looking woman was the good-natured and comely, but unintellectual girl become! Wifehood and maternity had changed her thus, as I have since seen them change others even less promising than she" (5.44). Lucy's emphasis on Mrs. Leigh's beauty and kindness, in concert with her status as the center of her family home, locates femininity in the affective and domestic roles demarcated by "wifehood and maternity."

Moreover, Lucy's view of Mrs. Leigh as "changed" by marriage and motherhood asserts their educative power. Mrs. Leigh's example thus defines education as that which accomplishes the change from girl to woman, reproducing a prevalent mid-Victorian understanding of education's purpose as preparing the student for her or his adult vocational, social, and gender roles. Mr. Home (Count de Bassompierre), himself a man devoted to scientific learning, has this function of education in mind when he teases Paulina about their mutual need for continued "schooling" (26.301). Though he asserts that "Miss Snowe [must] . . . undertake both you and me," he posits different results for their lessons (26.301). Schooling, he tells his daughter, will "make you steady and womanly, and me refined and classical" (26.301). Home's jest encapsulates two central elements of *Villette*'s depiction of education for women. First, it identifies the goal of female learning as engendering and refining femininity. The right lessons, by teaching particular knowledge and by reinforcing particular behaviors, will make Paulina into a creature recognizable as a woman to her society. They will make her "womanly." Second, Mr. Home's comment excludes scholarly, "classical" endeavors from female learning. The parallel structure of Home's *bon mot* proposes the mutual exclusivity, if not

the opposition, of the two sets of terms, defining "steady and womanly" against "refined and classical." Mr. Home's remark, like Mrs. Leigh's example, intimates that because it does not prepare woman for her adult character and roles (especially those of wife and mother), scholarly learning is irrelevant to the development of femininity.

More than irrelevant, *Villette* identifies learning as capable of distracting women from the behaviors and duties of femininity. The novel conveys this capacity most strongly through the fulminations of M. Paul Emmanuel, whom a number of scholars read as a type of the anti-feminist.[80] Lucy's narrative characterizes M. Paul as particularly concerned with learned women, observing that when "'women of intellect' was his . . . theme: here he was at home" (3.30.354). She records his opinion as if summarizing an oft-heard argument: "A 'woman of intellect,' it appeared, was a sort of '*lusus naturæ*,' a luckless accident, a thing for which there was neither place nor use in creation, wanted neither as wife nor worker" (3.30.354). M. Paul's depiction of the woman of intellect as having "neither place nor use" indicates his adherence to a definition of education as a means of training individuals for adult roles. Women of intellect, however, exploit and distort this training to educate themselves out of their proper roles. The "woman of

[80] However, most critics also see M. Paul's eventual regard for Lucy as a reform or softening of this sentiment. See, for example, Ewbank's description of M. Paul as "the type of all those who resist female intellectual development" (201) and Basch's reading of the professor as "develop[ing] . . . from a caricature of anti-feminism to someone who recognizes Lucy Snowe's moral and intellectual autonomy" (165). In contrast, Millett presents him as an unrelenting enforcer of patriarchal privilege, contending, "only the outer surface of his bigotry melts when she [Lucy] proves a good student and thereby flatters his pedagogic vanity" (146).

intellect" is outside her natural, feminine roles but still excluded from male roles, for she is "wanted neither as a wife nor worker."[81]

Lucy's record of M. Paul's declaration continues, underscoring the woman of intellect's doubly excluded position. She asserts that M. Paul "believed in his soul that lovely, placid, and passive feminine mediocrity was the only pillow on which manly thought and sense could find rest for its aching temples; and, as to work, male mind alone could work to any good practical result" (30.354). M. Paul's conclusion with the "note of interrogation" he often employs during tête-à-têtes with Lucy, a monosyllabic "hein?," suggests that these beliefs might be exaggerated "to draw from me [Lucy] contradiction or objection" (30.354). Exaggerated or not, they reiterate contemporary mid-Victorian assessments of women's education, specifically his belief that the "male mind alone" can sustain the mental force associated with advanced education and that intellectuality will prevent women from finding husbands by ruining their "lovely, placid, and passive" feminine nature. Mlle Reuter, the Belgian *pensionnat* directress of Brontë's *The Professor* (1857),[82] makes a similar claim against intellectual womanhood when she protests Crimsworth's educational attentions to Frances Henri. Instead of developing her English and composition skills, Mlle Retuer contends that Frances would "be much safer

[81] M. Paul's claim here reproduces Southey's (in)famous advice to Brontë, recorded in Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), that her (supposed) ambition of authorship is "likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else" (1.8.117). M. Paul's depiction of an intellectual woman as unwanted as either wife or worker reflects Southey's belief that the (mental, if not intellectual) work of authorship will "unfit" woman for her "ordinary uses" as wife and mother without fitting her to compete with men in the literary marketplace.

[82] Published posthumously in 1857, *The Professor* was completed between 1845 and 1846, slightly over a year after Brontë left the Héger pensionnat in Brussels for the final time.

and happier if taught to believe that in the quiet discharge of social duties consists her real vocation" (18.125-26) Furthermore, the directress declares that if Frances desires "to retain the character and habits of a respectable, decorous female," she will abandon her ambitions for learning (18.125-26). In her assertion that too much learning will distract Frances from her "real vocation" and damage her reputation as a "respectable, decorous female," Mlle Reuter ascribes to intellectuality a power to transgress the boundaries of gender, to distort the "character and habits of a . . . female."

To return to *Villette*, M. Paul's invective against feminine intellectuality hinges on a perception of woman as naturally, biologically inferior to man. He manifests this belief through his insistence that only the male mind can "work to any good practical result" and his characterization of the learned woman as a "*lusus naturæ*," a sport or freak of nature who deviates from the type on a biological, natural level (30.354). However, M. Paul's arguments also imply an anxiety about the individual woman's abilities in his preference for "feminine mediocrity" (30.354). Mediocrity itself is designated as feminine, along with passivity, indicating that, for M. Paul, part of what makes a woman womanly is her lack of aspiration, action, and exceptionality. Consequently, not only intellect but also what he calls "pride of intellect" threatens femininity by disrupting the feminine ideal of placidity and mediocrity (30.351). It makes sense, then, that M. Paul's "innuendos against the 'pride of intellect'" apply only to women (30.351). M. Paul's disparagement of "pride of intellect" insists on the need for the potentially transgressive female intellect to be bounded and checked (30.351). Furthermore, his desire to erect

boundaries to female knowledge defines certain realms of learning as improper for women and registers an anxiety about a feminine breach of those realms.[83]

However much anxiety about his masculine privilege or power motivates M. Paul's hostility towards female intellectuality, he phrases his opposition to it in terms of protecting womanhood. Lucy recounts being "threatened, with . . . doom, if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex" by M. Paul (30.351). Though her qualification of the threat as "vague" and the "doom" as too absurd to be recorded works to dismiss the threat as laughable, it remains a powerful formulation of education's ability to disrupt femininity (30.351). Exceeding the academic "limits proper to [the female] . . . sex" leads to a fate inextricably tied up with those limits and that sex: too much learning will doom a woman to a lack of femininity. She will "trespass the limits" of her sex and become unsexed. "Pride of intellect" earns M. Paul's "bitterest innuendoes" because it leads a woman to her doom: her loss of femininity.

Furthermore, M. Paul's concern that Lucy will "conceive . . . a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge" doubly marks such ambitious learning as transgressive and therefore dangerous (30.351). This anxiety casts pride of intellect as inevitably leading women to yearn for "unfeminine knowledge," which, if they possessed it, would make them "unfeminine" as well. The "contraband appetite" awakened by educational or intellectual pride further challenges M. Paul's ideal of undesiring, self-

[83] Lucy's vision of M. Paul as a Napoleon, "quarrell[ing] . . . with twenty learned women" and "exil[ing] fifty Madame de Staëls" because they have "annoyed, offended, outrivaled, or opposed him" corroborates this reading by implying that M. Paul quarrels with and exiles "learned women" because they threaten his sovereignty by their ability to intellectually "outrival" or "oppose" him (30.348).

effacing womanhood. In M. Paul's view, female intellect and ambition for learning run the risk of transgressing not only the sexed boundaries of knowledge, but also the boundaries of sex itself. They transform the woman student into something essentially "contraband" and "unfeminine." Intellectuality, encapsulating both the acquisition of knowledge and an essential acquisitiveness, contradicts the passive, mediocre ideal of femininity to which M. Paul subscribes.

Lucy's narrative registers M. Paul's opinions with touches of sarcasm, distancing her from his negative view of learned women. Yet she never contradicts his assessments outright, either as character-Lucy or as narrator-Lucy. Instead, she disclaims ambition and any desire to join the ranks of the "women of intellect." In the face of M. Paul's accusations of her "contraband appetite," Lucy vows, "I had no such appetite . . . the noble hunger for science in the abstract--the god-like thirst for discovery--these feelings were known to me but by the briefest flashes" (30.351). In addition to her pointed denial of an ambition for scientific knowledge, Lucy also denies a desire for liberal, cultural intelligence, maintaining that she is "not restlessly eager after higher culture" (21.235). This comment's context--Lucy's recollections of her reputation in the *pensionnat* as a *bas-bleu*[84] and her preferences in terms of reading material--indicates that "culture" here operates in the sense of "the arts" as well as in the sense of "cultivation." Similarly, her response to M. Paul's tirade against the "woman of intellect" disassociates her from that figure. She answers his provocative "hein?" with "[c]ela ne me regarde pas" (30.354).[85]

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[84] "blue-stocking"

[85] "This does not concern me."

Lucy disavows her relationship to M. Paul's theme, and then her interest in it, adding, "je ne m'en soucie pas" (30.354).[86] By refusing to contradict or object to M. Paul's proclamations by more than sarcasm and distancing, character-Lucy and narrator-Lucy reinforce the conviction that learning distracts women from the concerns and roles of feminine womanhood.

M. Paul's hostility towards "women of intellect" amplifies Lucy's and Mr. Home's depiction of an intellectually rigorous education as irrelevant or antithetical to femininity. Lucy's musings on Mrs. Leigh and Mr. Home's jesting comparison of his education to his daughter's intimate that such learning will distract women from, or unfit them for, their primary domestic and familial adult roles--the roles which identify them as women. M. Paul's fulminations take this assumption a step further, asserting that scholarly pursuits foster and feed an ambition that goads woman to overstep the gendered boundaries that define her as womanly, namely "feminine knowledge" (30.354) and "femininity mediocrity" (30.351). However, the novel extends its representation of the incompatibility of intellectuality and femininity beyond a concern with training women for their maternal and marital duties, as M. Paul's description of the woman of intellect as a "*lusus naturæ*" suggests (30.354). Following M. Paul's perception of her as an individual who physically deviates from the type, *Villette* presents the educated woman as possessing an unfeminine or ill body.

Lucy's analyses of the pedagogical principles at work in the Rue Fossette foreground the perceived relationship between mental work and bodily disorder. Noting

[86] "I do not care about it."

the school's careful apportioning of study and leisure, she praises the *pensionnat*'s care for the students' health and bodies: "Nothing could be better than all her arrangements for the physical well-being of her scholars" (8.73). These arrangements include "a liberty of amusement, and a provision for exercise which kept the girls healthy; the food . . . abundant and good," and "plenty of time for sleeping, dressing, washing, eating" so that "neither pale nor puny faces were anywhere to be seen in the Rue Fossette" (8.73). More importantly, Lucy's descriptions identify a lack of mental exertion as a crucial element of the students' good health. A principal component of Mme Beck's "arrangement for the girls' physical well-being," Lucy finds, is the care that "[n]o minds were overtasked; the lessons were well distributed and made incomparably easy to the learner" (8.73).

This stress on the desirability of physical health (Lucy praises Mme Beck for it, and even wishes that "many an . . . English school-mistress would . . . imitate it") associates health with beauty (8.73). Lucy's emphasis on the lack of "pale" and "puny" girls lends health an aesthetic quality that her later description of the *pensionnat* girls as "healthy, lively . . . well-dressed and . . . handsome" reinforces. Like an elegant dress, these girls' physical health signals not only their beauty, but also their desirability in the marriage market, and so their femininity. Lucy's interrogation of Ginevra's "power" over Dr. John--"Who gave you that power? Where is it? Does it lie all in your beauty--your pink and white complexion, and your yellow hair?"--situates femininity in her (healthy) body (14.148). The belief that study interferes with physical well-being couched in Lucy's descriptions of Mme Beck's students also casts study as inhibiting the development of beauty and a proper female body. For example, by labeling her as a *lusus*

*naturæ*, M. Paul's invective against the "woman of intellect" connotes bodily variation--if not deformity (30.354).

Mme Beck's warnings to Lucy about too much study unite anxiety about education's negative effects on the female body with M. Paul's perception of intellectual ambition's negative influence on the female character. Lucy's self-education earns her a reputation for learning, so that "Madame Beck herself deemed me a regular *bas-bleu*, and often and solemnly used to warn me not to study too much, lest 'the blood should all go to my head'" (21.234). Mme Beck's "often and solemnly" repeated advice indicates that much learning not only affects a woman's social character--Lucy becomes a "blue-stocking" in the eyes of the *pensionnat*--but also her physical make-up. Echoing contemporary medical accounts of human physiology and the dire results of monopolizing in the brain vital forces needed to regulate the reproductive system, Mme Beck's concern with Lucy's blood flow suggests that mental exertion does directly impact the body. Her warning also posits a feminine norm that must protect the body by not overtaxing the mind. Mme Beck's warning unites the novel's two nodes of learning's incompatibility with femininity: its capacity to derange the healthy, feminine body and to distract the female mind from its proper concerns. Mme Beck's warning has further significance because it calls into question Lucy's efforts to educate herself, to which I now turn.

## LUCY'S EDUCATION: LEARNING AND TEACHING SELF AND OTHERS

As her recollections of Mrs. Leigh make clear, Lucy defines herself, at least partially, in terms of her intellect. This section tracks how Lucy's self-association with

learning impacts her self-education in matters intellectual as well as personal. Additionally, because Lucy's learning always relates to her position as teacher, this section also considers how her work to teach herself and her identification with learning shape her teaching of others. As a whole, this section's readings of Lucy's teaching and learning illustrate her negotiation of ideals of learning and ideas of proper femininity.

Put briefly, Lucy's description of Mrs. Leigh firmly situates the former as intellectually superior, outpacing at ten years old a girl of sixteen. Jon Hodge's characterization of Lucy's refusal to identify herself to Mrs. Leigh as a means of "hold[ing] . . . some sort of knowledge over Mrs. Leigh, placing herself in a position of epistemic mastery to compensate for being beneath Mrs. Leigh in so many other ways" emphasizes Lucy's sense of mental superiority by positioning her as still the master of greater information (912). Similarly, her records of the Rue Fossette's awe of her as "*appliquée*"[87] and a *bas-bleu* register pride in this perception even as she dismisses it as evidence of Labassecourian inferiority (21.234). Her explanation, "Indeed, everybody in the Rue Fossette held a superstition that 'Meess Lucie' was learned" denigrates the *pensionnat*'s awe by labeling it mere "superstition," a term that evokes not only Lucy's perception of continental woman as mentally and morally inferior to English women, but also her antagonism to Catholicism (21.234). Even though she disclaims an ambition to be learned, Lucy spends much of the novel in intellectual, educational pursuits which belie such declarations. Instead, Lucy's learning and teaching in *Villette* reinforce the importance of education to her character and to her understanding of femininity.

[87] "studious"

Significantly, Lucy's understanding of femininity is not colored by the typically feminine education of the mid-nineteenth century. Her silence about her childhood may occlude specific knowledge of her formal education, but her introduction to Ginevra Fanshawe establishes that Lucy has not received the sort of education that would mark her as lady-like. Ginevra, the novel's model of upper-class, continental womanhood, defines the accomplishments--and a semi-sanctioned disregard for other subjects, such as "history, geography, grammar, and arithmetic"--as the continental style of female education (14.145).[88] She further proclaims, "I have had a continental education, and though I can't spell, I have abundant accomplishments" (14.145). She makes her equation of learning with lady-likeness evident in her use of the query "are you clever?" as a means of uncovering whether Lucy "can play, sing, speak three or four languages?" (6.56). Lucy's response, that she "[b]y no means" has such accomplishments, demonstrates that Lucy's formal education has not included the accomplishments which Ginevra considers the marker of feminine cleverness (6.56). By her own admission, Lucy begins her educational progress ignorant of conventionally feminine learning.

Outside the bounds of feminine education at the start of the novel, Lucy is also excluded from masculine realms of knowledge. Lucy's record of M. Paul's "chronic

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[88] Paulina Home, Countess de Bassompierre, functions as the model of upper-class, English (conventionally ideal) womanhood. For critical explorations of Ginevra and Paulina as Lucy's models or alter egos, see, for example, Hughes's argument that Lucy's "observing Paulina is less solicitude than introspection" (714), Carlisle's reading of "each of the major characters . . . [as] an objectified version of Lucy's personality or experience--until together they become a way of positing at least a symbolic or vicarious fulfillment of her desires" (279), Levy's view of the novel as "constantly juxtaposing Polly to Lucy to Ginevra" so as to "represent a range of unsuitable or unattractive female figures in order to differentiate the heroine and specify the basis for her superiority" (404), and Peel's claim that "Because Lucy as narrator is making Polly perform Lucyness, Polly is able to function as an object for Lucy's own concerns about herself, and the novel's driving questions about its protagonist" (234).

suspicion that I knew both Greek and Latin" and his accusation that "a 'classical education' . . . silently sustained my efforts, and privily nurtured my wits" registers such suspicions as absurd in its mimicry of M. Paul's overblown language (30.353). Likewise, her judgment of M. Paul's accusations that she has plagiarized from classical sources as "farfetched" and "impossible" asserts Lucy's unfamiliarity with such masculine texts. Her further characterization of classical texts as "books I had not so much as heard of--and over the perusal of which I should infallibly have fallen down in a sleep" reinforces both her complete absence of classical learning and her feminine indisposition to undertake such a course of study (30.352). Even if she attempted to read one of these texts, she would "infallibly" drop into a stupor or sleep.

Neither accomplished nor the recipient of a "classical education," Lucy occupies a middle- to lower-middle-class, relatively un-gendered zone of learning when she comes to the Rue Fossette. Untouched by the accomplishments or classics that would designate a particular socio-economic status in addition to a gender status, Lucy's education casts her as intellectually ambiguous. However, the novel resists the potential transgression of Lucy's ambiguous intellect, one that might easily surpass the boundaries of proper feminine knowledge and mediocrity, by making it slow to start and intractable. "The beginning of all effort has indeed with me been marked by a preternatural imbecility," she reflects, indicating the exertion learning represents for her (30.351). Unlike M. Paul's scorned *lusus naturæ* to whom learning comes easily, Lucy's education requires sustained effort and mental discipline. Lucy's naturally slow intellect tempers her

eagerness for knowledge, inherently keeping her education within the bounds of proper femininity.

Lucy's association of her learning with teaching further aligns her education with appropriately womanly knowledge. She chooses education as the best means of earning a living, explaining to Mme Beck, "I had left my own country intent on extending my knowledge, and gaining my bread" (7.65). Her claim conveys a causal relationship between gaining knowledge and earning a living: more knowledge will enable Lucy to secure a better-paying position in Villette. The syntax of Lucy's explanation also depicts learning as Lucy's first consideration, what she wants most. I use "want" here in the sense of both "desire" and "lack": Lucy identifies with intellect, but she also lacks the feminine knowledge and skills that Ginevra identifies as central to continental female education. In order to gain her bread, Lucy must extend her knowledge of the customary subjects of female education, again keeping her learning within the bounds of conventional femininity and defusing the potential for transgression in her learning. Lucy's learning and teaching, spurred by this double-edged want, reflect her idiosyncratic desires for knowledge as well as the necessity of acceding to conventional concepts of properly feminine knowledge.

Lucy's personal goals and convention's dictates dovetail most neatly in her study of languages, on which the majority of her explicitly-narrated learning and teaching centers. Out of necessity she begins with French: "I . . . studied French closely since my arrival in Villette; learning its practice by day, and its theory in every leisure moment at night" (8.77). As she masters the practice and theory of French, Lucy advances into

composition, attending M. Paul's regular "lesson of 'style and literature'" at the *pensionnat* (2.21.237-38). Additionally, Lucy's project of "extending my knowledge" includes the study of German. Her choice of German reflects mid-Victorian trends in female education, which generally prescribed French as a compulsory subject and German, along with Italian, as the secondary or "extra" language component of a girl's schooling.[89] German is a canny acquisition for an aspiring teacher or *pensionnat* directress.

Lucy's study of German also brings her into closer alignment with her English identity by solidifying her connection to Paulina and the society of the Brettons. Herself canny, Paulina persuades Lucy "to join her in some study, as a regular and settled means of sustaining communication," exploiting Lucy's want of learning to keep up their friendship (26.301). Paulina proposes German, which, Lucy notes, "she, like myself, found difficult of mastery" (26.301). Taking lessons with Paulina fortifies Lucy's English identity by situating her in an expatriate community for "some hours every week" (26.301). Moreover, Fräulein Braun's "Deutch nature" identifies Lucy's and Paulina's habitual delicacy as specifically English, deeming their undemonstrative behavior "our English reserve" (26.303). By defining Lucy's "reserve" as constitutionally English, Lucy's study of German reinforces her national identity. It also makes Lucy more lady-

[89] See, for example, the early 1850s prospectuses for the North London Collegiate School and Cheltenham Ladies' College, which list German and Italian as "extras," as well as Cobbe's recollections of chattering daily in German and Italian as well as French at her 1830s boarding school. Brontë's desire to "acquire a thorough familiarity with French . . . improve greatly in Italian, and even get a dash of German" (Gaskell 1.10.157) anchor her 1842 request to study abroad in Brussels, and her letters home list all three languages among the "branches of education" taught at the Hégers' *pensionnat* (Gaskell 1.11.168).

like. That is, it gives her an accomplishment to be expected from educated, middle- and upper-class women, and so a better claim to teach such women.

Clearly, Lucy's learning and teaching function reciprocally: Lucy learns so that she can teach, and her teaching motivates, justifies, and directs her study. Teaching further serves as an education, or at least a practicum, for Lucy in female nature and the control of it. Whether as Mme Beck's nursery governess or her English teacher, Lucy instructs only young women. Though hired to teach English, Lucy, like most female instructors of the mid-Victorian period, is also supposed to teach her pupils femininity, as M. Paul articulates. His inquiry, "was I [Lucy] the mistress of these girls? Did I profess to teach them the conduct befitting ladies?" identifies instilling the "conduct befitting ladies" as what Lucy should teach as the "mistress of these girls" (21.240). Lucy's--and the novel's--silence in response intimates that she does not hold herself accountable for more than language instruction in the Rue Fossette, but Lucy shows herself willing to lecture on conduct and character elsewhere. For example, when she determines to console young Paulina, she imagines "improving the occasion by inculcating some of those maxims of philosophy whereof I had ever a tolerable stock ready for application" (3.26). Ginevra's teasing names for Lucy, including "Diogenes" (9.89) and "Timon" (21.233) suggest that Lucy has also attempted to improve Ginevra's character with her "maxims of philosophy."

Whether or not Lucy undertakes to teach feminine conduct or character, she cannot help but learn about female nature as an instructor. Her instructional role opens "all the undercurrent of life and character" at the *pensionnat* to her (8.79). In fact, she

finds that from her position at the estrade "first did I begin rightly to see the wide difference that lies between the novelist's and poet's ideal 'jeune fille,' and the said 'jeune fille' as she really is" (1.8.79).[90] Teaching enables Lucy to look beyond cultural or literary representations of womanhood and to uncover the actual, lived manifestations of femininity. The similar expression of this sentiment in *The Professor*, Crimsworth's remark that "[d]aily as I continued my attendance at the seminary of Mlle Reuter, did I find fresh occasions to compare the ideal with the real," as well as his subsequent, unflattering depictions of "the real," reinforces *Villette*'s insistence on exposing the female self covered over by novelists and poets. Additionally, for Crimsworth and for Lucy, this knowledge of "real" femininity assists them in gaining and maintaining authority in the classroom. Understanding the "'jeune fille' as she really is" enables Lucy to effectively control the young women whom she teaches.

The memorable first lesson that opens Lucy's eyes to "real" female character also presents Lucy as adept at exercising control over the female body, whether an individual body or a body of individuals. Two methods prove central to Lucy's establishment of authority: physical restraint and mental superiority.[91] First, physical restraint subdues the most irrational and disruptive elements of the female body of the *pensionnat* classroom. Unable to impress student Dolores with her earlier attempts to gain quiet attention, Lucy

[90] "young woman" or "girl."

[91] Hodge associates both strategies with a sadism or misery which he asserts is intimately linked to educational progress in the novel, noting that Lucy's "own teaching style adopts a similar sadistic impulse as she impresses her students with a . . . sense of misery; tearing up unacceptable work in front of the students who produced it and pushing a rebellious student into the closet prove to be insightful pedagogic techniques and effective classroom management skills" (910).

subdues her bodily: “Advancing up the room, looking as cool and careless as I possibly could . . . I slightly pushed the door and found it was ajar. In an instant, and with sharpness, I had turned on her. In another instant she occupied the closet, the door was shut, and the key in my pocket” (8.80). Physical imprisonment, marked by Lucy’s own swift, decisive movements, signals Lucy’s control over Dolores. However, it is Lucy’s careful restraint of her own body that ensures her authority over the remaining students, for it is only when she has “gravely and tranquilly returned to the estrade,” in an repetition of her earlier “cool and careless” movement to the back of the room, that “the pens travelled peacefully over the pages, and the remainder of the lesson passed in order and industry” (8.81). Lucy’s demonstration of cool restraint over her own body as well as over the unruly body of Dolores impresses the remaining girls with Lucy’s command and earns her their physical, as well as mental, docility.

However effective, bodily restraint is not Lucy’s only method of establishing herself in the classroom. She also commands authority by asserting her intellectual superiority. Lucy’s initial fantasy about gaining “command over this wild herd” through “stigmatizing” words of “contemptuous bitterness” in English positions a show of superiority via “contempt” as her first instinct. She cannot deliver such a speech in French, so Lucy asserts her superiority by example. Taking the exercise book from the class’s ringleader, Lucy proceeds to “remount the estrade, deliberately read the composition, which I found very stupid, and as deliberately, and in the face of the whole school, tear the blotted page in two” (8.80). Through her tone of voice during the reading, which registers her opinion of the composition as “very stupid,” and her unequivocal

destruction of the page, Lucy signals that such efforts are beneath her consideration and subject to her intellectual contempt. This action unmistakably asserts Lucy as the intellectual authority by impressing her pupils with her high standards and their gross failure to meet them.[92] That Lucy is most successful when she can assert her intellectual superiority implicates her intellect as a key means of valuing herself, both as a teacher and as an individual.

Her emphasis on establishing her value in the educational and social markets of Villette illuminates Lucy's self-association with mental superiority. Lucy's proud resolution, "Whatever my powers--feminine or to the contrary--God had given them, and I felt resolute to be ashamed of no faculty of his bestowal" demonstrates her sense of her intellect as an essential component of her identity (30.352). In one of the most serene moments of Lucy's hectic, "heretic narrative" (15.163), she describes her satisfaction with the routine of learning and teaching: "What with teaching others and studying closely myself, I had hardly a spare moment. It was pleasant. I felt I was getting on . . . polishing my faculties and whetting them to a keen edge with constant use" (9.82). Lucy's image of her faculties as something sharp to be whetted and wielded suggests her perception of her mind as her most powerful tool. Lucy's self-education whets and hones

[92] This tactic seems to have a strong appeal to Brontë, for Crimsworth repeats it twice in *The Professor*. Though he does not tear a composition during his first lesson at M. Pelet's school, he does begin by labeling the boys' readings "comme c'est affreux," thus "tak[ing] then down a peg in their self-conceit" and impressing them with his superior knowledge and expectations (7.53). At Mlle Reuter's pensionnat, Crimsworth mirrors Lucy's action more closely, taking the exercise book from Eulalie, one of the troublesome "queens of the school" (10.71) and reading it aloud, "marking the faults" before announcing, "C'est honteux" and "deliberately" tearing her "dictation in four parts" (10.72-73).

this tool, and the pedagogical tactics of physical restraint and mental superiority discussed above indicate how she wields its "edge" on her students.

Lucy's faculties have a wider application than the conduct of her English class and the improving maxims she foists on Paulina and Ginevra. Her mental discipline also schools Lucy herself. By turning her faculties of control and discipline upon herself, Lucy can train her own conduct and character. "Tranquil" is her most frequent term for her desired character of moderation, resignation, and resolution, and Lucy explains the benefits of tranquility in a neat maxim from her ever-ready stock: "There is nothing like taking all that you do at a moderate estimate: it keeps mind and body tranquil; whereas grandiloquent notions are apt to hurry both into fever" (5.45). Moderation, as it is opposed here to "grandiloquent notions," appears to apply more to expectations, perceptions, and reactions than to bodily concerns such as eating. The emphasis on tranquility as a state of mind or perception places the responsibility for an individual's total health on mental discipline. Regulation of the mind keeps mind as well as body from frenzy and fever. Lucy's ideal, then, is one of regulation and coolness, perhaps appropriate for a woman of the Snowe family. It inculcates a rational, resolute conduct, one that cannot be hurried or fevered by external circumstances or internal "notions."

Lucy's ideal of tranquility also includes an emotional component, as much as the above description attempts to elide it in the pairing of body and mind. For example, Lucy identifies Dr. John and Mrs. Bretton as "[f]riends, not professing vehement attachment . . . on whom, therefore, but moderate demand of affection was to be made" (16.178). As moderation applies to affection and emotion, so too does Lucy's ideal of tranquility. She

entreats “Reason betimes to check” her yearning for an immoderate friendship with the Brettons, desiring that she “be enabled to feel enough sustained by an occasional, amicable intercourse . . . and tranquil: quite tranquil” (16.178). Her repetition of “tranquil” at the end of this self-exhortation is immediately doubled and emotionally heightened: “Still repeating this word, I turned to my pillow; and *still* repeating it, I steeped that pillow with tears” (16.178). In her second invocation of tranquility, body and mind disappear. Reason, the personification of Lucy’s mental discipline, works to check the excess of emotion.

“Reason,” opposed to “Feeling” throughout *Villette*, aligns closely with Lucy’s propensity to intellectuality. The turn of mind that makes Lucy “happy . . . in examining, questioning, and forming conclusions” proves fertile ground for the Reason who disciplines by exposing mental weaknesses (2.19.198). Though Reason warns against Lucy’s prospective correspondence with Dr. John, it does not forbid conversation between them for, as she decrees, “Talk for you is good discipline” (2.21.229). Talk is “discipline” for Lucy because of its transparency and immediacy: “You converse imperfectly. While you speak, there can be no oblivion of inferiority . . . pain, privation, penury stamp your language” (2.21.229). Where writing includes the potential for revision and refinement, Lucy’s discourse underlines the intellectual, as well as experiential and socio-economic, divide between herself and Dr. John. Reason thus plays on Lucy’s want of learning to achieve its discipline.

Reason’s close relationship to Lucy’s intellectuality further manifests itself in Lucy’s recourse to study or other educational work as a means of controlling or denying

emotion. For example, attempting to distract herself from her yearning for a letter from Dr. John, Lucy "studie[s] . . . German pretty hard, [and] . . . a course of regular reading of the driest and thickest books in the library" (24.267). Lucy also employs this tactic of intellectual work as emotional distraction in the classroom. To quiet "the noise, the whispering, the occasional sobbing" of the first class upon the news of M. Paul's departure, Lucy makes "the English reading long and close," absorbing the girls' attention and so redirecting their energy away from emotional outbursts (38.439). The effectiveness of Reason and study to restrain emotion, whether those of Lucy's students or of Lucy herself, recapitulates the divide between femininity and intellectuality by portraying intellectual work or the masculine ideal of reason (as opposed to feminine emotion) as capable of overpowering and so controlling female feeling and the bodily expression of that feeling. Even as a woman wielding Reason and learning, Lucy's instruction of herself and her students reinforces the necessity of outside control over female minds and bodies to school both in appropriate conduct.

*Villette*'s most direct explication of Lucy's efforts at control through Reason exemplifies the impact of mental discipline on instructing emotions and the body that reveals them in proper behavior. Indeed, as Hodge affirms, "Far from demonstrating how to cure melancholic obsession, *Villette* shows us how to use the condition as a source of intellectual growth and expression" (910). In light of this relation between Reason and character education, Lucy's justification of her self-schooling in tranquility is worth quoting at length:

> These struggles with the natural character, the strong native bent of the heart, may seem futile and fruitless, but in the end they do good. They tend, however slightly, to give the actions, the conduct, that turn which Reason approves, and which Feeling, perhaps, too often opposes: they certainly make a difference in the general tenor of a life, and enable it to be better regulated, more equable, quieter on the surface; and it is on the surface only the common gaze will fall. (17.179)

Lucy's use of "action" as gloss for "conduct" brings the body into the orbit of "struggles with . . . character," suggesting that Reason's ostensibly mental control applies to the body as the vehicle for expressing (or suppressing) the "character" and the "heart." Lucy's concern with regulating the "tenor of a life" in order to project a quiet demeanor further positions the body as a medium, exposing an individual's "heart" and "Feeling," a legible "surface" on which "the common gaze will fall." I treat in detail this concept of the body as a readable index of an individual's inner (mental and emotional) state below; here I want to highlight Lucy's assertion that tranquility applies not only to the mind, the seat of Reason, but also to the body, the transmitter of Feeling. Additionally, Lucy's claim for the necessity of such regulation posits it as instruction in proper action and conduct, which is defined in part by the "common gaze" of society. Ultimately, Lucy's self-command instructs in exactly the way M. Paul insists her female instruction should, to "teach . . . the conduct befitting ladies" (21.240). Moreover, Lucy's insistence that regulating one's heart gives rise to certain actions or conduct transforms mental discipline, as Reason, into not only emotional but also bodily discipline. This transformation of the mental into the emotional and bodily typifies the mutual influence of mind and body that underlies the novel's depictions of female education and the legible, and so controllable, female body.

## "[A] STRANGE FEVER OF THE NERVES AND BLOOD": THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE OF FEMALE MIND AND BODY

Lucy's concern with teaching herself proper conduct, that is, regulation of the body as "the surface only the common gaze will fall" upon, constructs the mind, in the form of "Reason" or will, as capable of influencing the body (17.179). This section explores *Villette*'s presentation of the mutual influence of mind and body, positioning this mental and physical interrelation as essential to the novel's representation of femininity, female learning, and the individual woman's self-concept. After tracing the novel's presentation of the mutual influence of body and mind, I examine how it impacts Lucy's experience of her illness during the long vacation, her relation to her students, and her understanding and presentation of herself.

The novel demonstrates the interrelation of mind and body primarily through Lucy's presentation of herself. In large part, the relationship between mind and body is mediated by the emotions: Lucy's feelings trigger physiological changes. Such physiological changes generally involve the fever that Lucy's tranquility attempts to avoid, such as her reaction to the "lecture pieuse," which makes "my temples, and my heart, and my wrist throb" and increases her temperature until she is "burning hot" (13.117). Lucy's jealousy, aroused by M. Paul's mention of his ward sends "haste and heat . . . through my veins," leading to such physical change that M. Paul registers it as a sudden sickness, observing, "Your countenance changes; your color and your very eyes fade . . . . You must be ill" (41.489-90). Lucy's physical experiences of emotion's ability to disturb or disorder the normal physiological function signal the intimate interrelation

between “Feeling” and the body in *Villette*. Lucy’s ideal of tranquility and a calm surface evince her desire to instruct and control both.

Yet the discipline and instruction Lucy desires to achieve over her body do not always involve emotion, as her endeavor to educate her artistic taste in Villette’s galleries illustrates. Characterized as a “struggle between Will and Power,” Lucy’s conscientious attempts to call up “approbation of that which it was considered orthodox to admire” fail as the result of her personal sensibility’s “utter inability to pay the tax” (19.198). This mental struggle ends in “a wonderful sense of fatigue” (19.198-99). Like her emotional excess, Lucy’s mental discipline, goading herself to educate herself into “orthodox” appreciation, generates a bodily response: fatigue. Throughout this scene, Lucy’s description of educative labor relies on physical cues: her sensibility “groan[s] . . . forth its inability” to admire what it should (19.198). Therefore, Lucy’s relaxation of instruction leads to a relaxation of her physical form. Once she concludes that she can “dispense with that great labour” of forcing orthodoxy and admiration, she sinks “supine into a luxury of calm before ninety-nine out of a hundred of the exhibited frames” (19.199). As instructional effort produces physical fatigue and the removal of that spur relaxes Lucy’s frame into a luxurious recumbent position, Lucy’s body registers and reacts to the working of her intellect.

Beyond the mind’s ability to command the body’s labor or position, *Villette* insists that the two exist in a state of mutual influence. Indeed, Lucy draws a parallel between the function of the body and the function of the mind, observing, “There are human tempers . . .within whose influence it is as good for the poor in spirit to live, as it

is for the feeble in frame to bask in the glow of noon" (19.196). By asserting their parallel operations and influences, her reflection brings mind and body into an equivalence that Lucy's experience of illness during the long vacation exploits. Beth Torgerson's reading of Lucy's illness finds that a changed relation to the body enables Lucy to reinvigorate her self-education toward an ideal self, arguing, "In illness, Lucy's . . . experience of her physical body, a body in pain . . . gives Lucy the opportunity . . . to reframe her self-identity more in keeping with her inner values rather than culturally imposed ones" (74). Whereas Torgerson suggests that a heightened awareness of the body enables a re-framing of identity by allowing Lucy "to analyze the cultural constraints--ideals, values, and roles--placed upon her," my readings of Lucy's illness eschew the mediating pressure of "cultural constraints" between body and identity.

Lucy's nervous illness illustrates the mutual influence of mind and body on each other to derangement or disease. Crucially, Lucy's narratives of the illness vary in their account of whether a weakened mind weakened the body or an ill body led to an ill mind. For example, her initial account suggests that mind sickens body, that "a day and night of peculiarly agonizing depression were succeeded by physical illness," forcing Lucy to take to her bed "in a strange fever of the nerves and blood" that combines mental instability with bodily illness (15.159). Later, however, she implies that physical derangement has caused her to hallucinate, concluding "I had myself passed into an abnormal state of mind; in short, that I was ill and delirious" (16.169). In a similar set of equivocations, Lucy identifies a "fever" as "the real malady which had oppressed my frame," positioning her "perturbation of spirits" as a result of the fever (16.172). Yet she tells Dr.

John that "it was all the fault of what you call my 'nervous system' . . . a cruel sense of desolation pained my mind: a feeling that would make its way, rush out, or kill me--like . . . the current which passes through the heart, and which, if aneurism or an other morbid cause obstructs its natural channels, impetuously seeks abnormal outlet" (17.185). These two sets of conflicting narratives obscure any direct causal relationship between mind and body in Lucy's illness. Sally Shuttleworth reads this ambiguity as a conscious ploy on Lucy's part, observing that she "seems to shift in and out of physiological explanation of the self as it suits her convenience" (234). My reading is less interested in the narratives' motives than in the way in which they convey a fluidity of influence, in which mind and body reciprocally sway each other towards derangement.

Additionally, the ambivalence of Lucy's illness--her inability to consistently identify its starting point or "real malady"--signals a gap in Lucy's habitual self-discipline. Her inability to fashion a coherent narrative of her illness, to order it and make it legible to the gaze of Dr. John, Mrs. Bretton, or Père Silas mirrors the bodily excess of her illness. This gap in Lucy's self-command manifests in her conduct, such as her inability to retain a tranquil, unengaged, ladylike reserve. "My patience gave way, and without notice: all at once," she confesses, attributing the failure to her state of recovery, "illness had worn it and made it brittle" (18.189). Illness's capacity to enfeeble Lucy's patience evokes the body's ability to overcome or subvert a woman's careful cultivation of particular behaviors or knowledge, an ability that provoked much mid-Victorian anxiety about female nature and the female body.

As the increasing pathologization of menstruation beginning in the 1850s suggests, the conventional view of the female body, ruled by its reproductive capabilities, is one of domination over the female mind.[93] This understanding of the body's influence on gender and the mind has two main iterations. The first iteration claims that the body must be deferred to at all stages of development and all phases of life, or it will suffer irreparable damage, leading to a non-functional body, one that cannot perform its gendered functions, including the formation of gendered instincts and ways of thinking. The second iteration insists that the body must be deferred to in order to keep all functions operating normally, to forestall any excess of or abnormal outlets for the body's powers that could overwhelm the brain, leading to hysteria or other nervous illness that overcomes or short-circuits a woman's mental functions. In this case, the woman would become more animal than human, Bertha Rochester instead of Jane Eyre. In explicating these (admittedly broadly sketched) theories of the female body's power to disrupt or usurp a woman's mental, moral functioning, I do not wish to diagnose Lucy's lapse in patience with Dr. John. Instead, I elaborate these contemporary perceptions of the body to emphasize the fluidity between the (female) body and mind as it is portrayed in *Villette*. Moreover, these medico-scientific theories underscore the threat of such fluidity to conventional manifestations of gender and thus the need to control, discipline, and educate gender.

[93] Shuttleworth's extended explication of the relationship between women's physical bodies and their mental functions is an especially helpful gloss here. See, for example, her summary of the supposed effects of women not capitulating to their menses: "not only might their physical health break down, but they could be excluded forever from the social category of womanhood, whether through the loss of their sanity, or from the onset of barrenness, and the cessation of their reproductive powers" (79).

Indeed, *Villette* is filled with female bodies and minds construed as potentially subversive of conventional perceptions of gender, to which Lucy's lessons in the difference between the "ideal 'jeune fille' and the said 'jeune fille' as she really is" attest (8.79). By situating the majority of Lucy's narrative within the bounds of a *pensionnat de demoiselles*, the novel foregrounds the necessity for and processes of disciplining and educating the female mind and body. Lucy's frequent comparisons of English and Labassecourian women serve as a running exploration of the ways in which the mind and body generate--and obstruct--specific definitions of womanhood. Mme Beck's pedagogical system privileges the students' good health (and good looks) over intellectual progress as a means of aiding their development into young, marriageable women. The students' easy lessons, ample exercise and quality meals foster the development of healthy, beautiful, feminine bodies. Lucy's descriptions of the *pensionnat* imply that its level of intellectual rigor is tuned to avoid the bodily harm caused by too much study.

Yet Lucy's comparisons of Labassecourian to English women also imply that Mme Beck's light lessons cater to a womanhood in which the body outpaces the mind and so must be given the greater consideration. Lucy's observations of her pupils mainly center on their mental and moral attributes, but she links the mental to the physical through her imputation that the Labassecourian *pensionnat*, like the Catholic Church, caters to the body in order to distract from the realization that the "mind was being reared in slavery" (14.127). Her most direct reflection on the bodies of her foreign students similarly conflates the mental, moral, and physical. The girls' "eyes full of an insolent

light, and brows hard and unblushing as marble" (8.79) embody their native character, which Mme Beck sums up as "rondes, franches, brusques, et tant soit peu rebelles" (8.78).[94] The insolence and immodesty revealed in the girls' eyes and "unblushing" faces markedly contrasts with Lucy's memory of "quiet, decorous English girls" (8.79). Her assertion that "I never saw such eyes and brows in England" drives home her increasing certainty that the "continental 'female' is quite a different being to the insular 'female' of the same age and class" (8.79).

Lucy's pronouncement of English and European females as "different being[s]" implies a difference in physicality that *The Professor* explicitly elaborates. Crimsworth, whose initial experiences of teaching at the *pensionnat de demoiselles* closely mirrors Lucy's, proves less shy about appraising his continental female students. Like Lucy, Crimsworth finds the *pensionnat* a field for comparing real and ideal womanhood as well as the foreign and the English schoolgirl. His comparisons portray the Belgian female as both over- and under-developed. For example, he describes the typical Belgian girl as coming to physical maturity much earlier than her English sister: she is "in age not much above fifteen but full-grown as a stout young Englishwoman of twenty" (12.83). By fifteen, the Belgian girl has the developed body of a woman, and her precocious physical maturation is mirrored in her "air of flirtation" or "loose, silly leer" (12.82). By linking the girls' bodily maturity to their expressions of sexuality, *The Professor* presents continental women as warped--"mentally depraved" is Crimsworth's exact term--by their overdeveloped bodies (12.82).

[94] "open, frank, brusque, and ever so slightly rebellious."

However, Crimsworth also characterizes his Belgian pupils as "degenerate," a term that connotes underdevelopment, an inability to reach the common evolutionary level. He brands a number of girls "inferior-looking Flamandes" who exemplify "that deformity of person and imbecility of intellect whose frequency in the Low Countries would seem to furnish proof that the climate is such to induce degeneracy of the human mind and body" (12.84). Because the continental female body develops more quickly and completely than the mind, it must be given priority. The blood must not all go to the head: it is needed for the more important body. Crimsworth's depictions of degeneracy and precocious sexuality demonstrate the perception of mutual influence of mind and body that underpins his interest in phrenological principles. Less invested in phrenology than *The Professor*, *Villette* draws attention to this mutual influence in order to position the body as an external indicator of the individual's mental "Will and Power," and therefore as a medium for the individual's education and control (19.198).

*Villette*'s comparisons between English and Labassecourian women center on the European woman's lack of mental "Will and Power," generally concluding that Lucy's foreign pupils are constitutionally incapable of mental (or moral) self-discipline (19.198). For example, Lucy describes her pedagogical strategies as necessitated by her pupils' lack of will and power to apply themselves to learning:

> Severe or continuous mental application they could not, or would not, bear: heavy demand on the memory, the reason, the attention, they rejected point-blank. Where an English girl of not more than average capacity and docility would quietly take a theme and bend herself to the task of comprehension and mastery, a

> Labassecourienne would laugh in your face, and throw it back to you with the phrase,--"Dieu que c'est difficile! Je n'en veux pas. Cela m'ennui trop." (9.83)[95]

Lucy repeats this claim in the context of Fräulein Braun's awe of her and Paulina's progress in German, attributing it to the fact that Braun is "[a]ccustomed to instruct[ing] foreign girls who hardly ever will think and study for themselves" and who "have no idea of grappling with a difficulty, and overcoming it by dint of reflection or application" (26.303). In short, *Villette*'s comparisons between English and Labassecourian schoolgirls reveal that continental girls have constitutionally less "Will and Power" than do English girls.

This inherently lower level of "Will and Power" applies not only to the girls' intellectual capacities (and thus the expectations and strategies for their education), but also to their general character and conduct. Mme Beck's "respect for 'Angleterre'" (8.72) perhaps results from an understanding of this difference, for she esteems Englishwomen "for what she was pleased to term their superior intelligence, and more real and reliable probity" (8.73). Lucy, too, remarks on the difference of moral will and power during her channel crossing: "Foreigners say that it is only English girls who can . . . be trusted to travel alone" (6.53). The will and power that allow English girls to chaperone themselves and to persevere in their studies must, for continental girls, be imposed by outside forces, such as the school and the church. The Rue Fossette *pensionnat* prioritizes the schoolgirls' physical needs not only to cultivate healthy, and therefore properly feminine womanhood, but, as *Villette*'s pointed comparisons between continental and English girls

[95] "God, this is difficult! I do not want to do it. It is too boring."

suggest, because the body is the best means of controlling girls who are unable to command themselves. Lucy's attention to and application of these differences in her teaching indicate that she accepts, or at least finds useful, the principle of mutual bodily and mental influence. Furthermore, her understanding of bodily control as a means of, if not a substitute for, mental will and power inflects Lucy's self-discipline.

Though the comparisons between European and English girls at school articulate how the Englishwoman's self-command serves as its own surveillance and education, the novel still identifies surveillance and education as necessary components of female identity. It is not that English women are above, and so can dispense with, the surveillance and coercion of their lives, characters, and bodies, but that they have internalized them. Self-surveillance and self-regulation become markers of English femininity: the surveillance and regulation mark a woman as female, and the self-administration marks her as English. Indeed, as Torgerson notes, "Lucy takes her self-control and repression with her as part of what she defines as 'England' when she sails for Labassecour" (62). Lucy, the novel's paragon of Englishness, therefore must also be its paragon of self-surveillance and regulation.[96] Her "struggles with the natural character" epitomize how regulation of mind and body simultaneously enacts and reacts

[96] See, for example, her patriotic outcry in the face of M. Paul's slanderous lecture, "[V]ive l'Angleterre, l'Histoire et les Héros!" (29.341). Notably, Lucy is the only female English figure in the novel who is not somehow Europeanized. Ginevra's exclusively European education and her attendant religious ambiguity--she has "quite forgotten my religion" and is unsure "whether I am one [a Protestant] or not: I don't well know the difference between Romanism and Protestantism"--clearly mark her as not truly English (6.54). Kent's perceptive argument that "Lucy's way of inhabiting her English identity is strongly associated with Protestant interpretations of the Bible and a secularized version of the belief in predestination" underscores this use of religion as a marker of nationality (330). Paulina, the novel's other English woman, holds a French title (the Countess de Bassompierre) and is, through her father, of "mixed French and Scottish origin" (1.7).

to surveillance. The process of shaping the character and the "native bent of the heart" into a state "which Reason approves" connotes a constant monitoring (17.179). The goal of such monitoring, a life that is "quieter on the surface," implies that self-surveillance and self-fashioning can screen the individual from the "common gaze" of external observation and judgment (17.179). Lucy's schooling of her "natural character" forms a new character, one cultivated under the aegis of Reason and her ideal of tranquility.

Like Lucy's mind, which must be continually instructed in a character proper to her personal circumstances and educated in order to provide for her survival as a teacher, Lucy's body must be disciplined to her circumstances and for her survival. Her adaptation to Miss Marchmont's confined, invalid's lifestyle exemplifies this physical schooling. She constricts appetite, action, and interest to the two "hot, close rooms [which] . . . became my world" so that "[a]ll within me became narrowed to my lot . . . . I demanded no walks in the fresh air; my appetite needed no more than the tiny messes served for the invalid" (4.37). By allowing Lucy to be constantly present at the invalid's side and by removing appetites or desires that would make her restless or discontented with her employment, this contraction of body and mind to Miss Marchmont's two rooms helps her to survive in her position as that lady's companion.

The lack of appetite that prefaces Lucy's illness during the long vacation similarly illustrates the role of bodily discipline in Lucy's survival. At first, the "mental pain" of attending to "the crétin" left at the Rue Fossette deprives Lucy "often of the power and inclination to swallow a meal" (15.158). Upon the girl's departure, Lucy's refusal to eat becomes a tacit assertion of her position as one who, as Mr. Home puts it later, has "to

act and not be served" (25.286). She refuses to trouble Goton, the *pensionnat*'s cook, with her meagre appetite, explaining that because "Goton could do nothing for me but bring me a little tisane and a crust of bread, and I had refused both so often" that it seemed "useless" to continue such "journeys from the dwelling-house kitchen to the school-dormitory," Lucy stops receiving meals (17.183). Counterintuitive as it may appear, Lucy's fasting, by portraying herself as a humble and unobtrusive member of the *pensionnat* staff who does not aggrandize herself by appropriating the *pensionnat*'s resources, works towards her survival in that role. By making no extra work for Goton, Lucy preserves her place in Mme Beck's good favor, and consequently her position as a teacher, much as her subsistence on "the tiny messes served for the invalid" presumably enables her to endure her position as Miss Marchmont's companion.

Self-command, of attitudes and appetites, enables Lucy to survive. Yet Lucy's schooling of her body achieves more than basic survival or equanimity in her employment. For example, Lucy paces the first-class room "afoot many hours" in an attempt to control her desire for M. Paul, demonstrating how one act of physical discipline can serve as another form of control (38.446). Lucy's pacing allows her to keep down her tears until she is "certain that the whole household were abed, and quite out of hearing" (38.446). Again, Lucy's schooling of her body works to frustrate surveillance, to offer a quiet surface on which the common gaze will find nothing of import, nothing that reveals the inner self. Lucy's relief at having her distress at M. Paul's departure "called illness--a headache" further testifies to the body's ability to obfuscate conduct or character from unwanted judgment (38.449). Bodily self-command, along with the

regulation of the mind and emotions, assists in self-preservation by screening the inner life.

### "[O]N THE SURFACE ONLY THE COMMON GAZE WILL FALL": THE LEGIBLE BODY AND READING FOR MASTERY

Lucy's obsessive efforts at control implicate the body not only as a surface for the common gaze, but as a legible one, capable of revealing mental powers or emotional states which the individual seeks to contain or disguise. In this final section I examine how reading the body functions as a tool for mastery of others, specifically a tool that allows an educated man to control women. After exploring the mechanisms and consequences of this control through knowledge of the body, I conclude by considering Lucy's mental and bodily self-discipline as a means of both frustrating potential readings and enabling her to read and control others.

Lucy's concern with frustrating interpretation of her body suggests that knowledgeable reading of the body can confer mastery over that body and the individual of whom it speaks. Lucy's strategies for classroom command, her lessons with M. Paul, and her employment under Mme Beck illustrate how examining and knowing the body can be employed for educational ends. Lucy's illness at the long vacation and her experiences with Père Silas and the Catholic Church reveal that this kind of knowledgeable reading pertains to the fields of medicine and religion as well. Each type of knowledge engenders a different mode of reading or interpretation, yet, for the most part, the novel presents knowledgeable readers as masculine. Indeed, *Villette* presents this reading and mastery as frequently divided along gender lines: a man reads a woman.

This gendered reading is readily apparent in the novel's engagement with art, particularly Vashti's performance and the paintings of the Cleopatra and "La vie d'une femme" (19.201). These public spectacles are all female, and though Lucy gazes and muses on all of them, the responses of her male companions dominate these scenes. First, Vashti, whom Lucy depicts as supremely physical, a passion "immediately embodied," and whom critics have identified as the novel's manifestation of the female artistic spirit, garners judgment from Dr. John based solely on her gender (23.258).[97] His "branding judgment" of Vashti "as a woman, not as an artist" figuratively marks gender as what Dr. John reads in the body (23.260). As Ruth Robbins notes, "Dr. John cannot accept that the actress, the woman artist, should be judged by her artistry. Rather, women must be judged by their appearances, and by their morality," for his opinion not only "brands" or marks her "as a woman," but also delivers a "branding" condemnation of her (220). Lynn Voskuil's reading of Vashti in the context of Brontë's and G. H. Lewes's responses to Vashti's real-life model, Rachel Felix, provide a useful gloss here, particularly Voskuil's articulation of Lewes's "tendency to anchor feminine identity to universal ideals detached from the actual conditions of women's ordinary lives" (411-12). I read Dr. John's judgment of Vashti as involving just this "tendency" towards viewing the individual woman in terms of "universal ideals."

[97] See, for example, Litvak's argument that the actress "serves as a potent, heavily freighted image for both Lucy and Brontë as female artists" (486) and Johnson's assessment of Vashti's performance as "the only place in a Brontë novel where a professional female artist is described. Vashti appears immediately after Lucy has described her own method of authorship and thus raises questions about women and representation, whether through writing or acting" (624). Jacobus as well as Gilbert and Gubar read Vashti as the exemplar of the female Romantic artist.

Second, Lucy's experience in the gallery with M. Paul centers on male readings of female bodies. M. Paul's judgment of the Cleopatra as "[u]ne femme superbe . . . mais une personne dont je ne voudrais ni pour femme, ni pour fille, ni pour soeur" equally judges the female body in terms of his ideal of womanhood (19.204).[98] The female body is not just a body, a physical object, but always a woman, a man's wife, daughter, or sister--someone whom he possesses. M. Paul's insistence that Lucy concentrate on the tableau of "La vie d'une femme" instead of the Cleopatra likely stems as much from their "flat, dead, pale and formal" (19.201) depictions of the female body as from the womanly virtues those "grim and gray" bodies portray (19.202). Like Dr. John's "branding judgment" of Vashti, M. Paul's reaction to the paintings--and to Lucy's contemplation of them--reads the female body in terms of ideal womanhood. As Katherine Kim argues in her reading of *Villette* as a reworking of the "Bluebeard" tale,

> Paul desires that Lucy view only representations of the pious, caretaking "angel of the hearth" and nothing contradictory to the mythos they embody . . . . Paul's mandate that Lucy study these women creates yet another layer of attempted patriarchal control in which Lucy is instructed to essentially learn how to be a proper woman from premeditated, stylized depictions of women accepted by Paul and forced onto Lucy. (414-15)

Beyond the patriarchal control emblematized in the painted women's position, hanging on the wall like Bluebeard's wives, these images emphasize the fact that, as M. Paul's comment on the Cleopatra epitomizes, the male ideal of womanhood always connotes relationship and possession.

[98] "A superb woman, but not a person whom I would want for my wife, for my daughter, or for my sister."

When turned to present, living female bodies, these male readings operate in much the same way. While such readings can appear benign, as in young Dr. John's characterization of Paulina as "a perfect cabinet of oddities" (3.27), or ambiguous, as with M. Paul's "indefinite" initial assessment of Lucy's physiognomy (7.67), they nevertheless situate the viewing or reading man as possessing or determining the viewed or read woman. Dr. John's vision of Paulina as a "cabinet" or collection implies himself as the collector, or at least, viewer, of her oddities, and M. Paul's "skill in physiognomy" enables him to "see through" Lucy and determine her fate by recommending that Mme Beck engage her (7.66).

Ginevra's complaint about Dr. John's affection exemplifies how flesh-and-blood female bodies can become invested with and determined by the male view. Ginevra feels "far more at ease" with Lucy than with her suitor not only because "he expects something more of me than I find it convenient to be. He thinks I am perfect: furnished with all sorts of sterling qualities and solid virtues, such as I never had, nor intend to have," but also because "one can't help in his presence, rather trying to justify his good opinion; and it does tire one so to be goody" (9.91).[99] Ginevra's feeling that she is compelled "to talk sense--for he really thinks I am sensible" illustrates the extent to which male readings of the female body control and shape the individual woman, even if only while "in his presence" (9.91).

[99] Fletcher associates Lucy's efforts at self-determination and self-discipline with her experience of similar frustration: "Like Ginevra, Lucy chafes at the thought of being expected to act in accordance with the needs and wishes of others. It is not the identity itself which is disturbing . . . but, rather, the assignment of that identity by others as a kind of costume" (731-32).

Paul's repeated analyses of the female body enact a similar power over Lucy. Angela Hague defines this power as benevolent, "not as a hostile act of aggression or acquisition but as the first step toward an interpenetration and fusion of self and other" (591-92). However, I contend that M. Paul's reading power includes exactly this impulse to "acquisition" and dominance. M. Paul confesses to "watching over" the entire *pensionnat* as a study of "human nature--female human nature," as Lucy's experience bears out (31.363). His initial reading of Lucy's face ushers her into the Rue Fossette *pensionnat*, installs her as a nursery governess and so ensures that he will have more opportunities to study, understand, and master her. Out of his surveillance of her body, M. Paul forms her character, defining it as one that needs his oversight. For example, in Lucy's body M. Paul sees an ambition for power: "je crois voir en vous je ne sais quoi de rayonnante, petite ambitieuse" (15.154).[100] His related conviction that Lucy is "rather a fiery and rash nature--adventurous, indocile, and audacious" stems from his surveillance of her body's increased mobility, for after becoming reacquainted with Paulina and the Brettons she is frequently absent from the *pensionnat* (26.302).

M. Paul's mastery of the body--knowing it as a body of knowledge--leads to a desire to master the body, to order and command it. "You are one of those beings who must be *kept down*. I know you! I know you!" he explains to Lucy, and he defines his knowledge of her as physical: "Other people in this house see you pass, and think that a colourless shadow has gone by. As for me, I scrutinized your face once, and it sufficed" (15.155). M. Paul's ability to see a vibrant body where others see a "colourless shadow"

[100] "I believe I see in you something of a desire to shine, you little ambitious woman."

insists on Lucy's visibility and embodiment while also giving him the right to see that she is "kept down." In some sense, if M. Paul's sight constitutes her as a living "being" instead of the ghostly "shadow" that others see, then he has the power to determine that being and its life. M. Paul's desire to keep Lucy down--to direct her according to his interpretation of her character--has roots in his belief that because Lucy's body serves as a legible index of her mental and emotional states, reading her body is reading her psyche.

However, M. Paul's insistence on Lucy's needing to be kept down depends upon a reading of her body that overlays her individuality with his conception of womanhood and its proper cultivation and performance. Control of Lucy's (increasingly mobile and rebellious) body would allow M. Paul to regulate her actions, bringing them into line with his ideal of female behavior. M. Paul's construction of their relationship as one of brother and sister, especially at the outset of his educational attentions to her, exhibit this endeavor to manage Lucy's femininity. His first construal of himself as Lucy's brother, his inquiry "whether, if I were his sister, I should always be content to stay with a brother such as he" conflates the sibling relationship with proximity and possession (33.383). To be a sister means to be always under the protective arm and watchful eye of the brother. Indeed, he only refers to her as "petite soeur"[101] after being reassured that she suffers when separated from him, reinforcing the relationship between sisterhood and surveillance (33.383, 36.417). In addition to justifying his desire to keep Lucy close, M. Paul's installation of himself as her brother enables his efforts to shape her by scripting

[101] "little sister"

her desire. Again soliciting Lucy's sisterhood, he claims that "a lonely man like me, who has no sister, must be but too glad to find in some woman's heart a sister's pure affection" (35.407). This insistence on the sister's "pure affection" recalls M. Paul's ideal of "lovely, placid, and passive" womanhood and, in doing so, attempts to frame Lucy's body--for she will be his "kindred in all but blood" and "stay with" him--and her mental and emotional desires according to his ideal of femininity (30.354). Moreover, such fraternal command would allow him to check her intellectual cultivation, keeping her from developing an "appetite for unfeminine knowledge" that could lead to her "trespassing the limits proper to . . . [her] sex" (30.351). Reading Lucy's body gives M. Paul knowledge of her mind, which he desires to use to "keep down" and thereby to protect and cultivate both as feminine.

Like M. Paul, Dr. John reads Lucy's body as revealing her inner self in order to protect her body and mind. Dr. John's examinations of Lucy, however, depend less on ideals of "a sister's pure" womanhood, and more on the tenets of medical practice (35.407). Dr. John's initial diagnosis of Lucy's illness during the long vacation requires nothing more than a reading of her body, as Mrs. Bretton's report to Lucy that "he thinks you have had a nervous fever, judging from your look" demonstrates (17.180). In the same way, when he recounts for Lucy how he found her Dr. John stresses her physical state, describing her as "perfectly unconscious, perfectly bloodless, and nearly cold," thereby reducing her illness to her "exhausted and suffering appearance" (17.184). From this physical evidence, Dr. John concludes that "there must have been a high fever" (17.185) and that Lucy's "nervous system bore a good share of the suffering" (17.183).

The physical diagnosis of Lucy's illness as a nervous fever--physical in both its method of obtaining the diagnosis and in its resolute adherence to physical causes even in the face of Lucy's proposal of mental causes--exemplifies how Dr. John's medical knowledge colors his readings of Lucy's distressed body.[102]

Lucy's first encounter with the nun further reveals that Dr. John is unable to read beyond physical symptoms. His main concerns for Lucy are bodily, commanding her not to "cry and distress yourself so cruelly" and to "[c]ome out of this cold room" as if the stress of crying and exposure to the garret's cold temperature are the only causes of her distress (22.246). Though he asks her to explain "how . . . you feel physically" at the beginning of his subsequent examination, Dr. John soon takes command of Lucy's body, answering his next question, "Are you growing calmer?" himself, observing that she "tremble[s] like a leaf" (22.247). Dr. John's medicalized readings of Lucy's body function to make him her master, usurping her power to narrate her own illness or articulate her own physical sensations. Indeed, Dr. John begins Lucy's tale of her illness, interrupts her during it, and takes it over, eventually finishing it for her.

When Lucy demurs from specifying her vision in the course of Dr. John's examination, he again employs his professional reading of her body to get an answer. However, in this instance the reading functions not as a diagnostic tool, but as a threat. The ability of Dr. John's "professional point of view" to reveal what Lucy would obscure

[102] Hodge explores Lucy's resistance to Dr. John's diagnosis, arguing that though "Lucy cannot completely disagree with him . . . she seems committed to contesting John's attempts to gain authority over her case history" as a means of resisting his reading gaze (901). In reference to Lucy's own narration of her illness, Hodge notes, "Like her response to John's diagnosis, Lucy's self-assessment resists a man who would make her the object of his interpretive gaze. One way she achieves resistance is by denying her male interlocutor his language" (901).

demonstrates the coercive, mastering power *Villette* identifies in male readings of female bodies. What begins as a coaxing request that Lucy explain her vision becomes an assertion of his power to learn her secret through her body's helpless revelation of it: "I look on you now from a professional point of view, and I read, perhaps, all you would conceal--in your eye, which is curiously vivid and restless; in your cheek, which the blood has forsaken; in your hand, which you cannot steady" (22.248).[103] Dr. John here articulates what Lucy's obsessive management of her body and her mind attempt to frustrate or forestall: the "professional point of view" can read the body to reveal "all you would conceal."

Yet Lucy's "struggles" to become "quieter on the surface" are not, as Dr. John's threat implies, "futile and fruitless" (17.179). Though the body is capable of revealing the individual's heart and mind, it is also capable of resisting or redirecting the reading gaze. Lucy's "half on purpose" cutting of her finger with her penknife exemplifies how she deploys her body to baffle the mastering male gaze (36.416). Lucy feels M. Paul's "eye settle . . upon me gently" and beseech an emotional return from her (36.416). Still unsure of M. Paul's affections and intentions, Lucy does not want to betray her emotion at being thus examined and solicited, so she employs a physical "action [to] . . . give a turn to his mood" (36.416). She distracts him with a performance "he never liked to see," her mode

[103] The irony that Dr. John proves to be a remarkably bad reader of Lucy's body perhaps lightens the impact of this power. For example, Lucy notes that Dr. John, "I believe, never remembered that I had eyes in my head, much less a brain behind them" (10.98), when she first encounters him at the pensionnat, and later muses that he "wanted always to give me a rôle not mine . . . . He did not at all guess what I felt: he did not read my eyes, or face, or gestures, though . . . they all spoke" (27.318). He does not even recognize Miss Snowe the governess as Lucy, his mother's goddaughter, until Lucy is forced by his mother to reveal herself.

of mending her pens (36.416). Generally a poor mender, Lucy exaggerates her lack of skill in order to redirect M. Paul's gaze and emotional relation to her: "I cut my own finger--half on purpose. I wanted to restore him to his natural state, to set him at ease, to get him to chide" (36.416). Her bleeding finger--as well as her general lack of dexterity--draws M. Paul's attention to a part of her body which Lucy wishes him to view, giving her the power to compose M. Paul according to her liking, to "restore him" to a state in which she knows how to handle him.

Lucy's command of her body enables her to direct the reading gaze and thereby to control what her body reveals in a sort of theatrics or performance. Indeed, as Katie Peel has shown, "Brontë uses what Judith Butler describes as performativity, the performance of roles in order to manufacture an identity, as Lucy's means of transgression and empowerment" (231). Lucy's self-discipline also generates a type of invisibility, an ability to, as M. Paul asserts, appear as "a colourless shadow" (15.155), which Janet Gezari perceptively identifies as a strategic effort to make herself "unavailable for recognition, or rather unavailable for the misrecognition that accompanies judgment" (167). By cultivating a "shy and retiring . . . general manner" telegraphed by her "usually averted eyes" (16.177) and great capacity for stillness, Lucy is able deflect attention from herself until she attracts "just that degree of notice . . . given to unobtrusive articles of furniture" (10.98). Sandra Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's observation that Lucy "often seems to be telling any story but her own" as evidence of her "self-effacing" tendencies offers another example of Lucy's deliberate cultivation of obscurity, even as the narrator

of her life (417). Lucy is able to fade into the background of any scene, allowing her to remain, for example, for many months unidentified by Dr. John.

Lucy's talent for invisibility enables her to turn the tables and observe Dr. John's body, watching him "muse, smile, watch or listen like a man who thinks himself alone" until she masters him by identifying Dr. John as John Graham Bretton, her godmother's son (10.98). Indeed, her ability to observe Dr. John unobserved holds a special charm for Lucy: "I liked entering his presence covered with a cloud he had not seen through, while he stood before me under a ray of special illumination" (16.175). Kim cites this position of observation as a key example of "the manner in which Lucy inverts circumstances with those who would control, observe, and confine her in some key scenes" (407). Lucy's self-effacing self-command equips her to direct the scrutiny of her body that would reveal her identity. More importantly, her capacity for deflection, for scripting physical actions and becoming as noticeable as "carpets of no striking pattern," enables Lucy to master others' identities while allowing her to remain master of her own (10.98).

The self-mastery that Lucy cultivates and deploys throughout *Villette* not only empowers her to guard herself from outside influences that threaten to determine her, but it also serves as a method of self-determination itself. Lucy's description of her "struggles with the natural character" suggests that her self-regulation substitutes external ideals--the "common gaze"--for the individual's "native bent" and so unseats the individual in favor of the conventional (17.179). However, Lucy's self-education, in practice, enables her to cultivate her individual identity and to protect it from the expectations of the "common gaze" by cultivating a "surface" so tranquil as to be opaque (17.179). What

appears on the surface to be a capitulation to outside surveillance is actually a means of ensuring the survival of the self-determined individual.

This perception of the body as a "surface" that naturally reveals the individual's character or heart aligns with contemporary concepts of womanhood in its emphasis on outward physicality as an unmediated indicator of a "natural" or "native" essence (17.179). Interestingly enough, it also aligns with contemporary praise for *Villette* itself, which generally centered on Brontë's ability to draw life-like characters. For example, The *Examiner*'s review centers its praise of the novel in a judgment that the characters "are presented to us so that we know them, mind and body, and recognize . . . the fitness of each body for the kind of mind that dwells in it" (84). However, I contend that *Villette* upsets this understanding of the body and of womanhood through its portrayals of female education. The studied avoidance of intellectual exertion in the service of cultivating healthy, feminine bodies at Mme Beck's *pensionnat* indicates the extent to which the body operates not as a mirror of the mind, but as its competitor. Mme Beck's under-cultivation of her students' mental faculties implies that learning has the potential to diminish femininity not only by diverting the blood to the head or encouraging girls to neglect their accomplishments, but also by kindling unfeminine appetites or ambitions such as the self-determination espoused by Lucy and opposed by Catholic, continental arbiters of femininity.

*Villette* takes great pains to present Lucy as untouched by the Catholic, continental beliefs and institutions by which she is surrounded. It positions her independence of mind and body, epitomized in her self-education, as English and

admirable. Though M. Paul's ambiguous fate casts a shadow over Lucy's final assertions of happiness as the physically and economically independent directress of her own *pensionnat de demoiselles*, the novel's telos is one of positive progress, if not success, establishing Lucy as a model of female selfhood. Indeed, Robert Newsom reads the endings of *Villette* and *Bleak House* as offering "their heroines as exemplary--exemplary not just as 'cases,' but as psychologically and morally 'successful' cases of women who in effect cure themselves, and exemplary not just as domestic figures of the private life, but as figures who resist dominant, public institutions" (79). Newsom explicitly describes Lucy as a "model," finding it a "striking and significant fact that it is after all women who turn out to be our (that is, readers') models" (79).[104]

By presenting learning and teaching as Lucy Snowe's salvation from the disabled, English spinsterhood of Miss Marchmont, as well as from the repressive control of Mme Beck's Catholic, continental surveillance, *Villette* generates a model of womanhood determined, in part, by such intellectual pursuits.[105] Beyond positioning teaching and learning as acceptable pursuits for a woman, *Villette* implicates Lucy's adherence to "Reason" and her consistent alignment of herself with the intellectual as central components of English femininity. Yet, as Laura Ciolkowski argues, Lucy's "trajectory .

[104] Newsom explicitly extends this capacity of Lucy and Esther as models beyond their femininity, asserting them as models of subjectivity, noting, "This [the fact that the novels' models are women] is an important point, because these plainly are not books of conduct for women, but books aimed at male as well as female readers" (79). Torgerson's assessment of *Villette* as "a blueprint" similarly celebrates Lucy as a model of subjectivity, but confines her power as an example to "teaching a female audience" (57).

[105] Lucy's educational pursuits enable her to escape Miss Marchmont's fate in the sense that she lives an active, professional life in Labassecour. In another sense, Lucy recapitulates Miss Marchmont exactly, for she too ends her (narrative) life by re-telling the story of her single love-affair that ended in the death of her beloved before they could be married.

. . to the successful directress of her own school is plotted always in relation to her disavowal of the roles that are foisted upon her by the people with whom she comes into contact" (228). I argue that the roles of conventional femininity are among those Lucy disavows. Moreover, Lucy's sufferings under her nervous constitution, the loneliness and alienation that hang over much of the novel, and *Villette*'s maintenance of the mid-Victorian perception of education and intellectual pursuits as incompatible with femininity destabilizes Lucy's claims to coherent identity as well as to conventional femininity, undermining her capacity to stand as a model of feminine selfhood.

Lucy's equivocal position as both model of female subjectivity and as eccentric warning articulates *Villette's* ultimate ambivalence about female selfhood. *Villette*'s ambivalence about Lucy's ability to determine her own body and thus herself enables the reader to, in Athena Vrettos's words, "recogniz[e] . . . that private bodies are always in some ways determined by and representative of the larger culture in which they move" (579). As this chapter's readings of Lucy's mind and body--and her schoolings of both--suggest, female identity, like the female body, is always exposed and so subject to mastery and determination by those who would read it. Subject to the reading surveillance of so many eyes in *Villette*, not least her own narrating eyes and those of the "Reader" (42.493) whom narrator-Lucy addresses, it is no wonder that character-Lucy must ask, "Do you mean me . . . . Is there another Lucy Snowe?" (41.486).[106]

[106] Litvak's perceptive reading of *Villette*'s voyeurism and control implicate the reader in the novel's network of reading and being read: "[I]t is not just the characters who feel the unpleasant effects of the manipulative and antagonistic voyeurism that dominates *Villette*: to the extent that reading is itself a kind of spying (and the novel does not fail to underline this equation), we repeatedly find ourselves inserted in the discomforting-even humiliating-position of Madame Beck, by the kind of rhetorical one-upmanship in

which Lucy excels" (474). Shuttleworth places the reader not in the position of Mme Beck, but of Dr. John, arguing, "As readers, interpreting the signs of Lucy's discourse, we are constantly tempted by the text into re-enacting the role of Dr. John" (221).

# Chapter 5: Learning Self and Society: Negotiating Education's Double-Bind in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*

"While Brontë curses the fact that women are denied intellectual development, Eliot admits the terrible effects of this malnourishment but also implies that emotional life is thereby enriched for women," claim Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in in their landmark 1979 *The Madwoman in the Attic* (498). With this image of Brontë's violence and Eliot's resignation, Gilbert and Gubar reiterate a critical distinction that has dogged the two novelists since the revelation of George Eliot's gender in 1859. By reading *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) as a text of tension and struggle, not resignation, this chapter reconsiders such characterizations of Eliot's novels as embracing acquiescence to female intellectual "malnourishment."[107] It finds that struggle embodied in the figure of Maggie Tulliver, whose striving for intellectual development gives the novel its drama, if not its tragedy.[108]

The previous chapter read Brontë's *Villette* (1853) as an examination of education's impact on Lucy Snowe's body as well as her mind, arguing that the novel depicts the female body as a legible (to those who learn how to read accurately) index of the individual woman. Lucy's experiences of schooling, both formal and personal, generate an understanding of female identity as always subject to attempts at mastery and determination via the cultural forces of instruction. Through Lucy's efforts to govern and order her unruly body and mind, *Villette* dramatizes the effects of an individual's

[107] *The Mill on the Floss* was published in three volumes by Blackwood in April 1860.

[108] Critical evaluations of the novel frequently identify it as, in Knoepflmacher's phrase, "a tragedy for her times" (163). See, for example, Fraiman and Hardy.

internalization of the prerogatives of female education while troubling such an education's supposition of a unitary female identity.

Like *Villette*, *The Mill on the Floss* has generated a tradition of critical interpretation grounded in its autobiographical elements, such as that by Emily Eells, who reads the novel as a "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman" (35).[109] Though indebted to the insights such criticism has afforded, this chapter is less concerned with how Eliot's, that is, Mary Ann Evans's,[110] life influences the novel than with the novel's representation of the processes by which the individual subject comes to understand her/himself and her/his society. Focusing primarily on Maggie's frustrated affinity with learning, this chapter investigates education's integral but shifting significance for her maturation into middle-class adult femininity. Ultimately, I argue that *The Mill on the Floss* enacts on Maggie the perceived incompatibility between intellectuality and femininity that this project identifies as intrinsic to Victorian considerations of female education.

Crucially, education underpins, if not generates, the double-bind in which Maggie develops into young womanhood. Her constant state of not-quite-fitting-in and not-quite-satisfied bespeaks Maggie's struggle with the double-bind of her desire for community and her understanding of herself as exceptional. Though the novel presents education as

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[109] In addition to Eells, see Gilbert and Gubar, Homans, and Robertson.

[110] Born Mary Anne Evans, she took the pen name "George Eliot" in early 1857 during the early negotiations over what would become *Scenes of Clerical Life* with Blackwood. As mentioned above, the success of *Adam Bede* led to her acknowledgment of the pseudonym; Rosemary Ashton implicates Herbert Spencer in the revelation of the true identity of "George Eliot." For a more detailed discussion of Eliot's use of pseudonym and public reaction to it, see Ashton.

socially constructed and constitutive of communities, it identifies those communities as masculine. The learned lady belongs neither to the learned nor to the ladies. In order to illuminate the gendered, social grounding of education in the novel, I begin not with Maggie's formal education, but with Tom's. The ambition that motivates Mr. Tulliver to give Tom a prestigious classical education introduces the novel's representation of learning--a set body of knowledge--as generated and guarded by a community. Tulliver anticipates that, with the right education, Tom will "be even wi' the lawyers and folks" (1.7.111). He defines this group, the "lawyers and folks," in terms of the knowledge they possess (and deploy to bamboozle the uninitiated), characterizing its representative figure as "a sort o' man . . . as can talk pretty nigh well as if it was all wrote out for him, and knows a good lot o' words as don't mean much . . . and a good solid knowledge o' business too" (1.2.56). Therefore, when he finds that Mr. Stelling, Tom's tutor, is "acquainted with every branch of information, and kn[ows] . . . exactly what Tom must learn in order to become a match for the lawyers," Tulliver is satisfied he has made the right decision (2.1.173).

For his part, Stelling plays upon Tulliver's impression of education as enabling Tom to join the company of "lawyers and folks" while himself believing that a classical education, with its stress on Latin, Greek, and mathematics, is "the only right way" of training Tom (2.1.175). Stelling meets Tulliver's directives that Tom should be trained in "'mapping' and 'summing'" with "an assurance that he understood what was wanted" but disregards the father's requests (2.1.175). Stelling justifies his adherence to Latin and Euclid by arguing that because Tulliver has not been rightly educated, "how was it

possible the good man could form any reasonable judgment about the matter" (2.1.175). Tulliver's inability to form "any reasonable judgment" is, for Stelling, the natural condition of "irregularly educated people" (2.1.174). Of those lacking a classical education, Stelling believes it is "impossible these people could form sound opinions" (2.1.174).

Stelling's ruminations propose a community defined by its (lack of) knowledge. In defining such a community, Stelling implies its corollary, a community of the "educated," defined in terms of a discrete body of knowledge. He identifies "the Eton Grammar and Euclid" as "the only basis of solid instruction" and this solid instruction as that which separates the "regularly educated" from the "irregularly educated" because when "[f]ixed on this firm basis, a man might observe the display of various or special knowledge made by irregularly educated people with a pitying smile" (2.1.174). Stelling's vision of the classically educated man looking down on others, like Tulliver's ambition for Tom to be "even wi' the lawyers" defines communities in terms of shared knowledge. In both cases, specific learning serves to unite individuals under a shared social identity.

Education's capacity to define social groups as communities of shared knowledge has, in *The Mill on the Floss*, a related, more practical function: to demarcate existing social groups, particularly those tied to class. Phillip Wakem sums up succinctly the perception that guides Stelling's pedagogy and Tulliver's choice of a tutor when he explains to Tom that Latin is "part of the education of a gentleman" and that "[a]ll gentlemen learn the same things" (2.3.198). Phillip's demarcation of Latin, Euclid, and

the rest of Stelling's curriculum as "the education of a gentleman" identifies their learning as the product of a particular socio-economic group. Furthermore, it establishes mastery of these subjects as the signal of membership in that group--even if they, like Sir John Crake, later forget it. Mr. Riley's recommendation of Stelling because "a clergyman is a gentleman by profession and education" makes explicit Phillip's implicit claim, designating learning as a necessity for attaining that social rank (1.3.66).

The perception of education as inculcating social roles as well as knowledge additionally informs Tulliver's anxiety that "a parson be almost too high-learnt to bring up a lad to be a man o' business" (1.3.66). The Dodson family's doubts about the wisdom of Tom's education similarly hinge on the belief that such learning will uproot him from his hereditary social station: "what good is to come to the boy, by bringin' him up above his fortin'," wonders Aunt Glegg (1.7.111). Both concerns highlight the potential for a gentlemanly education to put Tom too high in rank or station. Tulliver's worry that a "high-learnt" man cannot be a "man o' business" and Aunt Glegg's pronouncement that Tom will be precariously "above his fortin'" both associate a particular course of education with a particular social standing.

The foregoing perceptions of education assert that the making and marking of a gentleman depend on the mastery of a body of knowledge, like Latin and Euclidean geometry. However, Tom's tuition at King's Lorton reveals that a gentleman's education also includes social training. In addition to correcting Tom's daily assignments and recitations, Stelling also "correct[s] . . . his provincialisms and deportment" (2.1.172). Indeed, Tom's sense of his life as newly "complicated not only with the Latin grammar

but with a new standard of English pronunciation" places the two types of learning, intellectual and social, on equal footing (2.1.170). Tom's experience of intellectual and social instruction as intertwined demonstrates not only how shared knowledge produces (or guards) socio-economic groups, but also how instruction perpetuates social markers. Knowledge of Latin is not enough to mark Tom as a gentleman: he must also display the pronunciation and deportment that customarily connote gentility. The inclusion of social instruction in Tom's formal education enacts Riley's assertion that a man is made a gentleman "by profession and education" in its suggestion that the distinguishing markers of gentility can be taught. In fact, *The Mill on the Floss* indicates that middle- and upper-class female education operates on exactly this principle. Maggie's refrain from kissing Phillip because "as a young lady who had been at a boarding-school, she knew now that such a greeting was out of the question" demonstrates that her education at "Miss Firniss's boarding-school" has centered on the social skills transform a "little wench" into a young lady (2.7.219).

The knowledge of social protocols that Maggie gains "as a young lady who had been at a boarding-school" illustrates education's imbrication in social reproduction, its power to define social groups and to create new members. In its ability to train Maggie into a "young lady," her formal education also reflects the definition of education predominant in St. Ogg's, as a means of training the individual for her or his adult roles. Expected to marry into the farming or merchant communities of St. Ogg's, Maggie learns to assume the role of young lady who will attract a suitable husband. Phillip's later attempt to educate Maggie out of her religious renunciation also operates on this concept

of learning even as it privileges different knowledge and purports to have a different aim. He questions her renunciation of "[p]oetry and knowledge," arguing, "you will not always be shut up in your present lot: why should you starve your mind in that way?" (5.1.324). Phillip's refutation of what he calls Maggie's "narrow asceticism" implies that her intellectual stagnation, while comfortable now, will hamper her once she overcomes her current troubles (5.1.324). Learning, Phillip implies, prepares the individual for the future by feeding the mind, stocking it with knowledge that will enable one to inhabit her or his future role.

Concern with his son's future lot similarly motivates Tulliver's investment in Tom's education. His determination to make Tom a "scholard" results from his desire that the boy should have a career and social position above his father's (1.2.53). He justifies the expense of his son's education by referencing Tom's future--and his own: "I shall give Tom an eddication an' put him to a business, as he may make a nest for himself, an' not want to push me out o' mine" (1.3.61). U. C. Knoepflmacher calls attention to Tulliver's employment of education to both provide for his son's future and differentiate him into a new community, observing that "though Mr. Tulliver may not want any competition from his son, he does want Tom to compete for him against the incomprehensible new order represented by Lawyer Wakem" (189). Indeed, Tulliver formulates Tom's education as pushing the boy out of the nest and out of his current social group, for he acknowledges that "two years at th' academy 'ud ha' done well enough, if I'd meant to make a miller and a farmer out o' him" (1.2.53).

Despite his father's efforts, however, Tom finds himself improperly educated for his eventual position as an employee of Guest & Co. Mr. Deane's assessment of Tom as "a lad of sixteen, trained to nothing in particular" defines education as preparation for a vocation in its comparison of classically educated young men to "so many pebbles, made to fit in nowhere" (3.5.257). It is not surprising, then, that a new education forms part of Deane's advice to his nephew. He recommends that Tom take "a temporary place in the warehouse, and . . . evening lessons in book-keeping and calculation" (3.7.270). Deane's emphasis on occupational learning in concert with work reflects a skepticism about the value of extra-vocational, classical, or liberal learning common in St. Ogg's. Mr. Deane exemplifies the prevailing opinion when he speculates "that in case of another war, since people would no longer wear hair-powder, it would be well to put a tax upon Latin, as a luxury much run upon by the higher classes" (3.5.255). Deane's equation of Latin with "hair-powder" classifies it as a frivolity or ornament as much as a "luxury," clearly marking it as neither essential nor functional, but of "the higher classes" (3.5.255).

Though, as Tom's experience bears out, much of such skepticism about learning relates to its association with luxury and the higher, non-productive classes, St. Ogg's also harbors suspicion about the effects of knowledge on the middle and working classes. Luke, Tulliver's head miller, reiterates Deane's rejection of learning as a distraction from the necessary and practical, telling Maggie, "I'n got to keep count o' the flour and corn--I can't do wi' knowin' so many things besides my work" (1.4.74). To Luke, learning is not only a distraction, but a potentially deadly one: "That's what brings folks to the gallows--knowin' everything but what they'n got to get their bread by" (1.4.74). Together, Luke's

and Deane's rejection of "knowin' so many things besides my work," whether as the slippery slope to the gallows or as an ornamental luxury, epitomizes *The Mill on the Floss*'s representation of education as tied to an individual's socio-economic position and so constructed by and constitutive of class-based communities. Moreover, the novel's use of two productive members of the St. Ogg's community and economy to define education as vocational training registers its sense of Tom's gentlemanly education as valuable for little more than making him a gentleman.

The novel's insistence on education as a social product coexists in tension with an understanding of intellectual capacity as an inherited trait. For example, Tulliver's anxiety about Tom's education centers on his sense of defective inheritance: "[W]hat I'm a bit afraid on is, as Tom hasn't got the right sort o' brains for a smart fellow. I doubt he's a bit slowish. He takes after your family, Bessy" (1.2.56). He imagines that Tom has inherited his "brains" from the maternal instead of the paternal side because the boy's brains are "slowish," reflecting an assumption that the female side is the inferior side of Tom's inheritance. Tulliver's claim attributes an individual's mental power to "the crossing o' breeds," genetic inheritance, identifying "brains" as the product of one's breeding, equivalent to height or complexion (1.2.56). A number of scholars have noted the novel's interest in the mechanics of biological inheritance as it operates on individual formation. Felicia Bonaparte, for example, finds that in *The Mill on the Floss*, "genetic laws are part of the rigorous order of destiny" and identifies as "a major theme the immediate . . . parental genetic ties which define the potentials" of Maggie and Tom (63).

Tulliver's uncertainty about whether or not Tom has "the right sort o' brains" for his proposed education constructs the boy's genetics as directly influencing his potential.

However, the novel qualifies the power of genetics to arbitrate destiny by situating biological inheritance within the realm of society: "[Y]oung natures in many generations . . . in the onward tendency of human things, have risen above the mental level of the generation before them" (4.1.294). The identification of "human things" as the drivers of new generations' advances over their predecessors implies a Lamarckian interpretation of evolution, in which offspring inherit the acquired traits of their progenitors.[111] The novel's vision of the individual's "inherited share in the hard-won treasures of thought, which generations of painful toil have laid up for the race of men" foregrounds social impact on biological inheritance by turning from the evolutionary sense of inheritance to the legal (4.3.308). Not only does the individual inherit the advanced "mental level" of the previous generation, but also its "treasures of thought," rising above his or her ancestors in educational opportunity as well as intellectual capacity. The interplay of Lamarckian and legal inheritance aligns the social and the natural, catalyzing "the onward tendency of human things."

To Tulliver's chagrin, however, the example of Tom and Maggie suggests that the natural is capable of deranging the social. To Tulliver, that "the lad should take after the mother's side instead o' the little wench" represents "the worst on't wi' the crossing o' breeds: you can never justly calkilate what'll come on't" (1.2.56). In the case of his

[111] For a discussion of how Lamarckian evolution enters the novel via the concept of habit, see Kristie Allen. Postlethwaite offers a helpful, if brief, overview of Eliot's and Lewes's interest in Lamarck's theories, especially as applied to the brain by Lewes and Herbert Spencer.

children, in which Maggie "takes after my side, now: she's twice as 'cute as Tom," nature deviates from the social order, bestowing intellectual capacity, a trait inherited from the father, on the daughter instead of the son (1.2.56). The inability of Tom's education to shape his character similarly indicates nature's power to thwart socially-guided nurture. Instead of penetrating into Tom's identity (where it would, according to Stelling's belief, form Tom by forming his perceptions and judgments), his classical training amounts to nothing more than a surface coating, "a slight deposit of polish" covering but not altering his nature (7.3.497). Tulliver's later complaint, that "when a man's got brains himself, there's no knowing where they'll run to," so that a "woman may go on breeding you stupid lads and 'cute wenches, till its like as if the world was turned topsy-turvey," opposes the existence of "stupid lads and 'cute wenches" to the expected social order.

Yet this disordered breeding, in which the female offspring inherits the intellect in place of the male, appears to be the norm in *The Mill on the Floss*. Maggie, not Tom, inherits her father's acuteness, and Lucy Deane is only partially jesting when she tell her father, "I'm very wise; I've got all your business talents," for there are no other Deane children (that is, no sons) to whom these talents might have been passed instead (6.7.429). The novel's depiction of female mental acuity as a "mistake of nature" in giving to women a male trait underscores *The Mill on the Floss*'s representation of intellect and learning as inextricably tied to the policing and perpetuation of social groups. Moreover, the "topsy-turvey" breeding that results in clever women registers the contemporary cultural perception of learning and intellect as incompatible with femininity.

**"[A] WOMAN'S NO BUSINESS WI' BEING SO CLEVER": FEMININITY AND LEARNING**

Tulliver's impression that his children, a "stupid lad . . . and 'cute wench," represent an inversion of the natural order, "as if the world was turned topsy-turvey," necessarily presents the clever girl as a *lusus naturæ*, or, as Diana Postlethwaite has defined her, "a genetic mutation from the norms of gender" ("Of Mothers" 306). This section explores the implications of this impression of the learning or learned woman as a deviation, charting how Maggie's society articulates the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality that shapes her education and underpins the double-bind that structures her personal and social development. Tulliver expands on his sense of learned womanhood as a deviation from the type of femininity by bringing it out of the realm of nature and into the realm of society. He muses that an "over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep" because "she'll fetch none the better price for that" (1.2.56).[112] His evaluation of Maggie's "price" defines female intelligence as an unnatural excess (again, a *lusus naturæ*) and a profitless excess at that. Just as the "long-tailed sheep" fetches "none the better price" for its excess of tail, the "over-'cute" woman is not more desirable as a wife for her excess of brains.

In fact, the novel suggests that, in the St. Ogg's of Maggie's youth, an excess of brains may diminish a woman's desirability. Tulliver articulates the undesirability of the

[112] Compared here to long-tailed sheep, Maggie is also related to another "sport of nature" in Book One, Tom's lop-eared rabbits. Luke's mediation on the rabbits as "things out o' natur" functions as a rejection of learned womanhood parallel to Tulliver's, though with a grimmer end (1.4.75). Attributing the lop-eared rabbit's leading characteristic to "nothin' but contrariness" towards divine order, Luke condemns the animal to death: "Things out o' natur niver thrive" (1.4.75). Luke's judgment of the rabbits foreshadows Tom's pledge that he will "hate" Maggie as a "nasty disagreeable thing" if she grows up to be a "clever woman" (2.1.183). It further depicts the intellectual female as an aberration outside the social and natural order and so not fit to survive, serving as a prescient warning to the girl who will be shunned as sexually and morally aberrant and who will not survive the novel.

intellectual woman by stressing its opposite, "winking and smiling at Mr. Riley with the natural pride of a man who has a buxom wife conspicuously his inferior in intellect" (1.3.67). He also verbalizes this opinion, explaining that he chose his wife "because she wasn't o'er 'cute" (1.3.63). Similarly, Stephen Guest's qualifications for a wife include the condition "not stupid," which tellingly limits the amount of intellect to be desired in a woman. Stephen's pleasure in "improv[ing] . . . the minds of ladies by talking to them at ease on subjects of which they know nothing" further testifies to this perception of womankind as intellectually subordinate to mankind (6.2.389). Lucy's fear that "Maggie should appear too odd and clever to please that critical gentleman" confirms the pervasive influence of this definition of femininity by positioning intellectuality as antithetical to what will "please . . . [a] gentleman" and thus what is appropriately feminine (6.2.386). The perception of the clever woman as a less-desirable wife underlines the exclusion of the learned lady from full femininity by the society that defines and polices it.

The communities that produce and protect the category of learned equally attempt to exclude the feminine from full learning. Instead of labeling the feminine scholar (or scholarship produced by women) undesirable, this iteration of the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality emphasizes woman's essential incapacity for learning. Tom's education at King's Lorton only reinforces his belief in female intellectual inferiority, which he had hitherto expressed by labeling Maggie's "knowledge 'stuff'" and Maggie herself as "a silly little thing" (1.5.83). In a rehearsal of his later derision of female intelligence as unequal to his classical learning, Tom's opinion that "all girls were

silly" hinges on their inability to perform masculine skills: "they couldn't throw a stone so as to hit anything, couldn't do anything with a pocket-knife" (1.5.83). Tom's perception of Latin and Euclid as masculine knowledge--a perception fostered by the close association of the classical curriculum with the figure of the gentleman--similarly colors his refusal to consider Maggie capable of such an education. "I should like to see you doing one of *my* lessons," he sputters, "I learn Latin too! Girls never learn such things. They're too silly" (2.1.181). Tom defines femininity as "silly," using social and gender conventions to limit woman's innate abilities.

In fact, Tom takes Maggie's culturally produced ignorance as proof of her biological inability when she incorrectly pronounces part of his Latin exercise: "I told you girls couldn't learn Latin" (2.1.185). Tom extends Maggie's incapacity to all women, defining femininity in terms of ignorance, for "all girls [are] . . . silly," and, therefore, all "Girls can't do Euclid" or Latin (2.1.186). Moreover, Stelling validates Tom's definition of womanhood as incompatible with true learning.[113] Women "can pick up a little of everything," Stelling states, and his assessment of the female mind, like Tom's, characterizes the whole gender as unequal to male learning (2.1.186). He pronounces that women have "a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow" (2.1.186). Stelling's judgment, which rehearses contemporary Victorian rhetoric about female education's goals and limits, aligns with

[113] "Inappropriate as he is in other respects for Tom's future career," Jacobus wryly observes, "Mr. Stelling thus proves an excellent schoolmaster to his latent misogyny" (214).

Tom's definition of girls as "silly" in its identification of a "quick and shallow," and therefore inferior, intellect as an essential condition of womanhood.

While Tom and Stelling articulate essential female mental inferiority within the context of formal education, the novel depicts this perception as having a wide-ranging currency. For example, the very inferiority that condemns Maggie in Tom's eyes at King's Lorton absolves her (to a degree) in the Red Deeps, where Tom justifies her transgression as a product of her weak, feminine mind. He accuses Phillip of "taking advantage of a young girl's foolishness and ignorance" (5.5.359) and threatens to expose their meetings if Phillip makes the "least attempt to . . . keep the slightest hold on her mind" (5.5.360).[114] Tom's assignment of blame to Phillip in the Red Deeps grows out of a long-held and culturally-sanctioned definition of femininity as intellectual inferiority.

*The Mill on the Floss* conveys cultural perceptions of intellectuality's incompatibility with femininity principally through representations of womanhood as incapable of learning or undesirable because of it. However, the novel also establishes this incompatibility through perceptions of the educated woman as monstrous or transgressive. For example, Tom's reply to Maggie's assertion that she will grow up to be "a *clever* woman" casts the learned lady as universally reviled: "I daresay, and a nasty conceited thing. Everybody'll hate you" (2.1.183). By repeating with slight alteration his

[114] Burdett seconds Tom's identification of Maggie's ignorance as the cause of her "seduction" by Phillip in her reading of Maggie's attraction to Stephen as the product of her lack of education. Burdett argues that the music and attention that seduce Maggie "would not have worked on . . . any well-educated young lady" (36) and that the novel "explicitly signals" that Maggie responds as she does "because it is the poorly educated woman's script to do so" (37). However, Burdett places the failure on Maggie's education, not her intellect, whereas Tom blames Maggie's lack of morals and her lack of education on her essential, feminine "foolishness and ignorance."

assessment of the clever woman, calling her a "nasty disagreeable thing," Tom presents intellectual womanhood as unclean, ill-tempered, and inhuman, not only "nasty" but a "thing" (2.1.183). Lucy's fear that Maggie will be "too odd and clever" to please gentlemen originates from a similar belief in the educated woman as not truly feminine (6.2.386).

Amplifying this estimation, Lucy's characterization of Maggie's learning as "witchcraft" positions the clever woman as transgressive (6.3.396). To Lucy, Maggie's knowledge marks her as abnormal, even occult: she defines "how is it you know Shakespeare and everything, and have learned so much since you left school; which always seemed to me witchcraft before" as "part of your general uncanniness" (6.3.396). For Lucy, Maggie's learning transgresses the prescribed boundaries of female education, for it takes place outside of their shared schooling and includes knowledge outside of the typical female curriculum. Therefore it casts Maggie herself as potentially monstrous: she is uncanny or a witch. These representations of the educated woman as a witch or a "nasty . . . thing" position intellectuality as incompatible with femininity by characterizing the intellectual woman as liminal, even monstrous.

The opposition between learning and ladyhood articulated in the association of the clever woman with witches, lop-eared rabbits, and long-tailed sheep defines femininity as a natural absence of intellectuality. Stelling's diagnosis of the female mind as "quick and shallow" makes this lack of depth an essential characteristic of womanhood. Moreover, these representations of the female intellect present the mind as inherently gendered, or, at least, influenced by gender. The concept of the gendered brain

became increasingly crucial to educational theory and the growing fields of psychology, biology, and sociology beginning in the 1850s, and the novel's foregrounding of its implications for Maggie particularly testifies to its frequent use in explicating and reifying gender difference. Eliot's 1854 essay on "Woman in France: Madame de Sablé" indicates the extent to which the recognition of sex in mind (as there is sex in body) pervades the intellectual and social *milieu* into which *The Mill on the Floss* was written. Following contemporary arguments, such as Herbert Spencer's, that the mind is influenced by the structure and mechanics of the body, "Woman in France" locates the "more abundant manifestation of womanly intellect in France . . . in the physiological characteristics of the Gallic race" (34) and concludes that it is because "her physical conditions refuse to support the energy required for spontaneous activity [that] . . . woman has not yet contributed any new form to art, any discovery in science, any deep-searching inquiry in philosophy. The necessary physiological conditions are not present in her" (34-35). Indeed, in "Woman in France," as in many contemporary explications of the gendered mind, the female "physiological characteristics" override the power of education to shape woman's nature: the "certain amount of psychological difference between man and woman [which] necessarily arises out of the difference of sex" will not "vanish before a complete development of woman's intellectual and moral nature" (32). For woman, at least, gender in body and mind is essential--it can neither be reinforced nor diverted by education.

While Stelling's judgment of Maggie's inability to undertake a classical education articulates his estimation of femininity as grounded in biological essentialism, his

inflexible curriculum reveals a conviction that education contributes to the mind's gender. Stelling's fear that "by simplifying and explaining" Tom's lessons for him, he would "enfeeble and emasculate his pupil's mind" implicates not only certain types of knowledge but also certain pedagogical methods in the creation of the mind's gender (2.1.177). The wrong information or laxer standards could jeopardize the student's gender formation. If, as Stelling believes, there is only one "right way" to teach a gentleman, then deviation from it necessarily involves a loss of masculine vigor, enfeeblement, or even a gender reversion, emasculation (2.1.175). In Stelling's logic, adding "smattering, extraneous information, such as is given to girls" to Tom's lessons will, in effect, make Tom into a girl (2.1.177). This concept of education's capacity to inculcate gender aligns with the novel's presentation of education as constructing and constructed by social groups, for education thereby reifies the distinctions between various adult social and vocational roles. Stelling's implication that education makes the man in terms of both social position and gender identity applies even more strongly to women, for *The Mill on the Floss* suggests that their poor education contributes to women's social and gender inferiority.

The novel presents female education as gendering the mind by underserving it. Reinforced by and reinforcing the perception that the female mind operates on "a great deal of superficial cleverness" and is inherently "quick and shallow" (2.1.186), Maggie's education epitomizes the "smattering, extraneous" learning considered suitable for women (2.1.177). The novel's depiction of female education as withholding from woman "her inherited share of the hard-won treasures of thought" and instead offering her

"shreds and patches of feeble literature and false history--with much futile information about Saxon and other kings of doubtful example" demonstrates how gendered education produces the inferiority by which it then defines them (4.3.308-09). Maggie's smattering education keeps her intellect from going far into anything through its piecemeal, disjointed quality, so that "everything she learned . . . seemed like the ends of long threads that snapped immediately" (4.3.306). Thus, for Maggie and for *The Mill on the Floss*, a girl's education genders her mind as female as much by what it does not teach as by what it does.

This presentation of female education highlights disparities between male and female education, reinforcing the novel's presentation of education, specifically liberal, classical education, as a male possession. The inadequacy of Maggie's feminine education fails to satisfy her, leading to her impression that male education, especially the education she witnesses at King's Lorton, is the site of true learning. Maggie's sense of her own education as hollow conditions her to define "real learning and wisdom" as the province of a man's education (4.3.307). She faults her feminine education for her dissatisfaction and discomfort in life, imagining, "If she had been taught real learning and wisdom, such as great men knew . . . she should have held the secrets of life" (4.3.307). With this view of gendered learning, Maggie turns to Tom's old "books, that she might learn for herself what wise men knew" and consoles herself with the thought that "Latin, Euclid, and Logic would surely be a considerable step in masculine wisdom--in knowledge which made men contented" (4.3.307). She accordingly sets to "filling her vacant hours with Latin, geometry, and the forms of the syllogism" (4.3.307). Lucy's

sense of Maggie's "general uncanniness" therefore reflects not only Maggie's surprising amount of knowledge (given her shorter span of school attendance) but also the masculine inflection of that knowledge (6.3.396).

If Maggie's uncanny ambiguity of mind enacts the novel's characterization of education as determining gender, then Tom's consistent efforts to undermine Maggie's intellect signal an effort to keep her in her gendered, subordinate position, outside the realm of masculine knowledge. His dogged insistence that girls cannot undertake a classical education amount to a clubhouse prohibition: no girls allowed.[115] Stelling's judgment of the female mind as dominated by "superficial cleverness" more powerfully bars Maggie from entering into the male territory of learning by defining her as naturally incapable of attempting it. As the arbiter of the siblings' debate on female intellectual capacity--and as their only example of a scholar--Stelling functions as a powerful warden of this male domain. In fact, Tom explicitly positions his tutor as controlling access to knowledge when he warns Maggie against reading the tutor's books because "Mr. Stelling lets nobody touch his books without leave, and *I* shall catch it, if you take it out" (2.1.182). The threat of violence (or of more lessons) underlying this vision of Stelling as jealously guarding books accentuates how certain types of knowledge and modes of learning are gendered as masculine and protected as such by men.

[115] A number of critics argue that Tom uses Maggie's ignorance to shore up his sense of superiority and masculinity. Ermath notes that "Tom is delighted when Maggie arrives for a visit" because it means that "now he can measure his ability in Latin against her non-existent one" and so salvage his self-image (590). Alley similarly reads Tom's prejudice as an attempt to combat his "emerging sensitiveness by . . . proving his 'masculine' superiority to Maggie" (187). Though Homans applies her claim that "Maggie's 'womanliness' will help . . . not only to denote but also to create Tom's 'manliness'" to Tom's and Maggie's social roles, I believe that it equally illuminates Tom's construction of education (173).

Consequently, Maggie can only experience such knowledge and learning as masculine. Like Stelling's books, Maggie can only access learning through male arbiters. Even Maggie's access to sacred knowledge is mediated by male forces. Not only does she adopt the prescriptions of the monk Thomas à Kempis, but she also receives the book from male hands. Bob Jakins brings it to her. Like Tom's school-books and Phillip's novels, Maggie's religious training reflects her dependence on a male warden.[116]

Tom is "rather disgusted with Maggie's knowingness" and actively works to exclude her from his gentlemanly education, but he is Maggie's primary means of access to knowledge (2.1.181). Tulliver supplies his family with a set of books, but truly judges them by their covers: "They was all bound alike--it's a good binding, you see--and I thought they'd be all good books" (1.2.62). Tom's formal education under Stelling therefore impacts Maggie by exposing her to knowledge otherwise inaccessible to her. Through Tom, Maggie gains access to the very event of his education, for she is "allowed to be in the study while he ha[s] . . . his lessons" when she visits him at King's Lorton (2.1.186). She also appears to have free access to Tom's books, for she gets "in her various readings . . . very deep into . . the Latin Grammar" and makes multiple attempts at Euclid (2.1.186). Tom's role as Maggie's *entrée* to (masculine) learning extends beyond his years at King's Lorton in the form of his "school-books," which "had been sent home in his trunk after his last term and left untouched since" (4.3.307). Once in possession of Tom's "Latin Dictionary and Grammar, a Delectus, a torn Eutropius, the

[116] Eells's "diachronic study of Maggie's readings" emphasizes how her learning "involves collaboration with a male character" (35). My analysis here considers Maggie's learning not collaboration so much as adoption or co-option of the male texts.

well-worn Virgil, Aldrich's Logic, and the exasperating Euclid," Maggie believes that she will make "a considerable step in masculine wisdom" and from these books "learn for herself what wise men knew" (4.3.307). Through his education as well as through his eventual rejection of it, which results in his neglect of his textbooks, Tom facilitates Maggie's engagement with masculine, scholarly learning.

Whereas Tom exposes Maggie to education because he is her brother, Phillip becomes Maggie's surrogate brother because he shares his learning with her. She predicates their sibling-hood on his knowledge and willingness to extend it to her: "But you are very clever, Phillip . . . . I wish you *were* my brother . . . . you would teach me everything--wouldn't you? Greek and everything?" (2.6.217). Later, Phillip takes up (Tom would say, takes advantage of) Maggie's association of brotherhood with learning in his attempt to win her away from her religious renunciation. His plea, "*Listen* to me--*let* me supply you with books . . . be your brother and teacher, as you said at Lorton," casts Phillip as a willing instructor, a gateway to the knowledge abjured by or inaccessible to Maggie (5.3.345). Phillip's construction of himself as Maggie's "brother and teacher" captures the way in which both he and Tom function as wardens of knowledge for her. They facilitate her education but also control what and how Maggie learns.

Tom's grasp of his brotherly rights and duties illustrates how male wardenship of knowledge aligns with a scripting of (gendered) social roles. His boyhood resolution "always to take care of her, [and] make her his housekeeper" demonstrates Tom's grasp of the brother's power to protect his sister by defining her social position (1.5.83). In

addition to defining her as his responsibility, if not his possession, Tom's vision of Maggie as his "housekeeper" reinforces his desire to have her inhabit conventional domestic femininity. It also subtly dissociates his from their sibling relationship, for though the term "housekeeper" commonly designated the female family member responsible for the day-to-day management of the home, it was also applied to a woman hired to perform those duties. More importantly, Tom identifies his superior knowledge and experience as justification for his ability to "take care of" Maggie and to define her. He uses knowledge, especially knowledge of the world, to insist on Maggie's need for his protection, contending that she lacks even the "sense enough to see that a brother, who goes out into the world and mixes with men, necessarily knows better what is right and respectable for his sister than she can know herself" (6.4.401). Tom's claim to better judgment about "what is right and respectable" presents his knowledge of society--"the world and . . . men"--as a means of determining Maggie's place in the society of St. Ogg's. His brotherly knowledge would script how she "goes out into the world and mixes with men" by proscribing her to the "right and respectable." Moreover, it attempts to determine her identity by dictating what "she can know herself." This calling into question of what Maggie (or any sister, any woman) "can know" recalls Tom's childhood attempts to regulate Maggie's access to masculine learning, illuminating how the desire to block Maggie from participation in his masculine knowledge underlies his ostensible concern to protect her.

## "[N]OT QUITE THE RIGHT BOOK FOR A LITTLE GIRL": MAGGIE'S EDUCATION

Maggie's experiences of instruction never escape the yoking of education, femininity, and control registered in Tom's claim to "know better" (6.4.401) Yet, as this section's examination of Maggie's formal and self-guided learning explores, her education and her self-identification with learning serve as a site of resistance against the coercion to conventional womanhood ingrained in her familial and social environment. In suggesting that Maggie's self-education distances her from conventional femininity, I oppose a strong strain of critical readings that identify Maggie's education, mainly her reading, as the process by which she manifests her growing passivity, submission, and femininity.[117] Though I understand these critics' frustration at Maggie's gradually less original engagement with the texts she studies, I believe that this "regression" reflects the novel's effort to represent the stagnancy of conventional ideals of formal education, which leave little room for individual interpretation or creative engagement, as demonstrated by Tom's instruction at King's Lorton (Eells 47). I argue that traditional education, as Tom and Maggie encounter it, performs much of the work of gender enforcement. For example, Maggie's formal education attempts to make her more conventionally feminine and therefore easier to control. Her mother and aunts agree on "Maggie's being sent to a distant boarding school" as the likeliest means of making her into a young lady, hoping that it "might tend to subdue some . . . vices in her" (1.13.166). Their disappointment at Maggie's slow progress in learning feminine submission

[117] Feminist readings particularly emphasize Maggie's learning as a regression from independent, creative interpretation to rote recitation of male texts. See, for example, Eells, Homans, Hottle, and Gilbert and Gubar.

reinforces an understanding of a girl's education as training her to perform conventional womanhood. Tom complains that Maggie "ought to have learned better than to have those hectoring, assuming manners" (3.2.234). Aunt Pullett's grumbling, "I might ha' let alone paying for her schooling, for she's worse nor ever" in terms of her behavior, "beyond everything for boldness and unthankfulness," reveals that Maggie's schooling was meant to train her in humility and gratitude (3.3.243). The assumption at work here, that female education primarily teaches ladylike behavior and character, aligns Maggie's education with Tom's, identifying education's purpose as generating a particular inhabitance of gender.[118] However, Maggie subverts, or, at least, evades the gendered goals of her formal education through her ongoing attempts at self-instruction. In the following readings, I argue that Maggie's engagement with learning results from and feeds a self-concept rooted in her facility for learning.

*The Mill on the Floss* introduces Maggie by identifying her with intellectual power. Tulliver's deliberations on Tom's education in the novel's first chapters repeatedly foreground Maggie's stronger claim to "the right sort o' brains" for such learning (1.2.56). Like the reader, who at first has no knowledge of Maggie beyond her father's descriptions, Maggie overhears and absorbs this characterization of herself as "twice as 'cute as Tom" (1.2.56). For example, Tulliver introduces her to Riley by calling attention to her cleverness. "In a lower voice . . . as though Maggie couldn't hear,"

[118] Both Tom's and Maggie's educations couple gender training to character training. Maggie's family primarily conceives of her education as changing her character. Similarly, Stelling imagines the classical curriculum will enable Tom to "form sound opinions" and from them a sound character (2.1.174). Additionally, both educations influence character in its more social sense, for both Maggie's and Tom's educations are also meant to give them the outward signs of their gentility, making Tom into a recognizable gentleman and Maggie into a proper young lady.

Tulliver boasts that "she'll read all the books and understand 'em better nor half the folks as are growed up" (1.3.61). Her father's willingness to praise Maggie's intellect in her hearing suggests that she perceives--and participates in--his being "proud to leave his little wench where she would have an opportunity of showing her cleverness to appreciating strangers" when he takes her to visit Tom at King's Lorton (2.1.181). Several scholars have characterized Tulliver's pride in Maggie's cleverness as reflecting his own value. For example, Karen Hottle reads it as "a proof of his own intelligence" (36), while Mary Hayes claims that Tulliver shows Maggie off as a curiosity, "an accident of gender" (122). I argue that the motive for his pride matters little, for Maggie imbibes it regardless. She uncritically accepts her father's pride and, in fact, works to perpetuate it, desiring that others "think well of her understanding, as her father did" (1.4.73).

Maggie's affection for her father encourages her to imbibe and embody his perception of her as clever, so that her intellect becomes the dominant element of her self-concept. Likewise, his emphasis on her reading ability results in Maggie's dependence on learning to form her perception of the world and her place in it. Maggie's unearthing of Tom's old school books in order to teach herself the rudiments of "masculine wisdom" when she wants "some explanation of this hard, real life . . . some key that would enable her to understand, and, in understanding, endure, the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart," articulates the degree to which Maggie regards texts as her proper advisors (4.3.307). Maggie believes that through reading she will learn how

to live--not only how to comprehend the "hard, real life" around her, but how to shape herself to exist within it.

Though frequently read as a repudiation of her learning,[119] the devotion with which Maggie later follows the prescriptions of Thomas à Kempis, "learning to see all nature and life in the light of her new faith," equally posits education as the means of comprehending life and constructing herself accordingly (4.3.311). She is still "filling her mind" and "learning," for she imagines "her own soul" as a pedagogical space "where a supreme Teacher was waiting" (4.3.311). Through this understanding of her self-education, Maggie thus resists and recapitulates conventional ends of female learning. On the one hand, her affinity for traditionally masculine learning puts her at odds with expectations for what girls can and should learn. On the other hand, her implicit belief that her learning will teach her to live rightly exemplifies the conventional association of education with character training which underlies both her and Tom's formal schooling. Maggie's eagerness to take books and their knowledge as guides to life and character places learning at the center of her identity.

Because learning and reading serve as the means by which Maggie orients and perceives herself, they come to shape her self-image, as her shame at encountering educational difficulties reveals. Her first encounter with Euclid is worth quoting at length for its exhibition of just such a difficulty:

> [S]he pushed her hair behind her ears, and prepared herself to prove her capability of helping him at Euclid. She began to read with full confidence in her own powers, but presently, becoming quite bewildered, her face flushed with irritation.

[119] See, for example, Levine, Homans, Eells, and Hottle.

> It was unavoidable--she must confess her incompetency, and she was not fond of humiliation. (2.1.183)

Maggie's bodily reaction, the flushing of her face, indicates how deeply "bewilderment" and "incompetency" unsettle her "confidence in her own powers" and, consequently, her sense of herself. This bewilderment intensifies when Stelling declares her essentially unfit for classical learning. In addition to having her pride "mortified," Maggie feels "oppressed by this dreadful destiny" (2.1.187) of ignorance which Hottle reads as "almost a death-blow to the young girl's sense of herself" (30). The intensity of Maggie's reactions to challenges to her intellectual faculties and her interpretation of such challenges as challenges to her very self (manifested in her humiliation, mortification, and sense of oppression) indicate the extent to which her capacity for learning undergirds her sense of self.

These moments of mortification also reveal that Maggie's perception of herself as clever requires outside corroboration. Maggie's self-definition as clever most clearly articulates itself in her desire for others "to think well of her understanding" (1.4.73). For example, her first acquaintance with Phillip provokes Maggie's drive to be characterized according to her mental talents. "[C]onvinced . . . from her own observation that he must be very clever," Maggie hopes that "he would think *her* rather clever too, when she came to talk to him" (2.5.211). Tulliver's praise of her intellect causes "Maggie's cheeks . . . to flush with triumphant excitement" at the "thought [that] Mr. Riley would have a respect for her now" (1.3.61). During her own colloquy with Riley, Maggie takes up her father's evaluation herself, discussing her books with him "in the desire to vindicate the variety of

her reading" (1.3.63). Similarly, Maggie's high spirits during her first evening at King's Lorton signal her gratified sense of herself as she becomes "animated with Mr. Stelling, who, she felt sure, admired her cleverness" (2.1.185). These examples establish the centrality of cleverness to Maggie's self-concept. It becomes, for her, a defining trait: "she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl" (1.7.105).

This drive to be perceived according to her intellectual faculties indicates that Maggie defines not only her self-identity (what makes Maggie Maggie to Maggie) by her cleverness, but also her social value. She initially articulates this idea of her social value in terms of a childhood prediction that "when he [Tom] grows up, I shall keep his house, and . . . I can tell him everything he doesn't know" (1.4.74). Maggie's vision of her domestic authority as predicated on--or at least coordinate with--intellectual authority underlines her estimation of her learning as her most desirable, useful quality. As Maggie and Tom grow apart, she abandons her plan of keeping house (and, it would seem, school) for him. However, she retains the belief in her cleverness as her primary social asset. Indeed, many of her daydreams of escaping the sordid and dreary life at the mill turn on her being helped by someone who recognizes her as learned. For example, she envisions appealing "to some great man--Walter Scott, perhaps--and tell[ing] him how wretched and how clever she was," confident that at this revelation of her intellect "he would surely do something for her" (4.3.308). The "mirage . . . in which she seemed to see herself honored for her surprising attainments" in the "masculine wisdom" she gleans from Tom's school books equally demonstrates Maggie's belief in her cleverness and learning as the means by which she will gain recognition or admiration. Whether she

imagines herself as Tom's housekeeper, the *protogée* of some "great man," or a celebrated sage, Maggie identifies her intellect as the quality which distinguishes her and gives her value for others.[120]

Maggie's perception of her cleverness as her chief social value animates her actions as well as her daydreams. Like her daydreams, Maggie's flight to the gypsies results from an impulse to escape her current life and a belief that her intellect will establish her as a valuable asset to her new community. Having decided that "her misery had reached a pitch at which gypsydom was her only refuge," Maggie imagines that "the gypsies . . . would gladly receive her, and pay her much respect on account of her superior knowledge" (1.11.143). Her assumption of reception and homage from the gypsies reflects her desire to inhabit a community in which her idea of her social value--her "superior knowledge"--is her social value. By abandoning the society that defines her according to her family and gender, Maggie "tries to redefine herself on the basis of her knowledge" (Hottle 36). Such a redefinition necessarily troubles gender by enabling Maggie to direct the education that represents the male culture from which she is barred. Hayes's assertion that Maggie's "purpose in going to the Gypsies, to teach them, speaks to the exclusively male privilege of education withheld from her" captures the gendered dynamics of Maggie's attempt to join and instruct the gypsy community (122).

[120] Maggie's eventual position as a teacher in a girls' school literalizes her belief in her cleverness as her social value, for her occupation cloaks her in a distinct social identity, at least to her family, who equate her teaching with "[g]oing into service" (6.12.457). Additionally, by enabling Maggie to earn her own living and thus live somewhat independently of her family, her teaching does generate Maggie's social and economic value.

Moreover, Maggie's flight to the gypsies dramatizes her aspiration to be defined according to knowledge instead of conventional femininity. She attempts to substitute cleverness for beauty as her social value. She chooses the gypsies as her new community because she has "been so often told she was like a gypsy, and 'half wild'" by her mother and aunts, who liken her unruly ways and dark complexion to those of the gypsies (1.11.143). Maggie takes refuge among the gypsies because she believes that they will accept her dark looks as normal, allowing them to look past her physical features and respect her for her intellect (1.7.105). Indeed, Maggie's presentation of herself as a potential gypsy (and, later, a potential gypsy queen) bypasses the physical similarities that prompt Maggie to admit that "aunt Pullet and the rest were right when they called her a gypsy, for this face, with the bright dark eyes and the long hair, was really something like what she used to see in glass" (1.11.146).

Instead, Maggie insists on her learning as the basis on which they gypsies should judge and accept her. "I mean to be a gypsy," she explains, making a sort of sales pitch for herself: "I'll live with you if you like, and I can teach you a great many things" (1.11.147). Even her proffering of books becomes an declaration of her own educational value: "I should have liked to bring my books with me, but I came away in a hurry . . . . But I can tell you almost everything there is in my books . . . and that will amuse you. And I can tell you something about Geography, too . . . very useful and interesting" (1.11.147). Her assertions that her memory is as good as the books themselves and that her learning will be both "useful and interesting" to the gypsies reveal Maggie's sense of her own value in her attempt to make others value and accept her.

However, Maggie's display of her "very useful and interesting" learning establishes that book learning, compounded by her self-identification with that learning, educates her little in terms of practical, social skills. The gypsies are more interested in the contents of her pockets than the contents of her books or her mind. Moreover, her only model for interacting with the gypsy community is one based in models of learning. For example, her desire to become a gypsy depends upon her ability to instruct them. In the first place, Maggie determines that the gypsies must be taught certain skills and tastes. Maggie's tuition is to be one of civilization, as her reference to Columbus indicates, for she feels that nothing will be quite comfortable until "she has taught the gypsies to use a washing-basin, and to feel an interest in books" (1.11.147). Marutollo reads Maggie's educational project here as proof that though she attempts to escape conventional expectations of femininity by becoming "both teacher and queen of the gypsies, she cannot release herself completely from her domestic imprint" as a middle-class woman (par. 10). I agree with Anna Marutollo and other scholars who read the gypsy episode as ultimately reinforcing the social and gender constructions Maggie tries to escape, but my reading of Maggie's determination to teach the gypsies aligns more closely with Susan Fraiman's assessment that the "agenda Maggie brings to they gypsies is less about feminine virtue . . . than it is about teaching, improving, and 'civilizing'" (130-31).

In addition to approximating gypsy life to her own middle-class mores, Maggie plans to make herself their queen through her civilizing teaching. After a few attempts at instructive conversation, Maggie feels a surge of triumph, believing that she is "really beginning to instruct the gypsies, and gaining great influence over them" (1.11.148). Her

later disillusionment with this project, her feeling "that it was impossible she should ever be queen of these people, or even communicate to them amusing and useful knowledge" retains her earlier understanding of instruction as the foundation of or first step to commanding influence, but it ultimately demonstrates that her book-based knowledge ludicrously, if not dangerously, misleads her as to the value of her learning as well as to her true social place (1.11.149). Maggie's belief in learning as the key to entering and commanding gypsy society echoes Tulliver's ambitions for Tom's education. Just as Maggie considers her learning a distinction that will allow her to influence and outmatch any gypsy, Tulliver believes that a gentleman's education will enable Tom to be "a match for the lawyers" and to influence St. Ogg's (1.3.63). Maggie's swift disillusionment with her plan, going from "having considered them very respectful companions, amenable to instruction, she had begun to think that they meant perhaps to kill her as soon as it was dark," prefigures Tom's rejection of his scholarly training as ineffectual (1.11.150).

Maggie's ambition for gypsy queenship, though it fails both in its acquisition of power and its attempt to situate Maggie outside conventional gender definitions, illustrates Hottle's claim that "Maggie comes truly alive when she feels that she has authority, and this authority is based on the knowledge she has gained" (37). Hottle's identification of Maggie's aspiration for authority foregrounds the shared roots of Maggie's ambition for queenship and to be considered clever, for both place her outside the influence of conventional definitions of female value. Maggie's fantasy of "a world where the people never got any bigger than children" in which the queen is "just like Lucy" but is actually "Maggie herself in Lucy's form" allegorizes this ambition aptly

(1.7.103). Maggie usurps Lucy's beautiful feminine form, the one praised by her mother and aunts, in order to become queen of her fantasy world. This sleight of hand (or, rather, sleight of body) privileges Maggie's cleverness over Lucy's beauty, for Maggie's imagination facilitates the body-swapping as well as generates the entire world she will govern. Thus, Maggie's intellect, manifested here as imagination, enables her to both appropriate and transcend conventional femininity, as she inhabits the beautiful female body and uses it to rule.

As Maggie's queenly aspirations mellow with age and experience, her ambition for control becomes a desire for independence and a refusal to be controlled by others. "I can't live in dependence," she confesses to Phillip, so she trains to be a teacher in order to escape a life of oppressive ladylike leisure with her mother and aunts (6.7.419). Lucy attributes Maggie's independence to her learning, telling Stephen that Maggie "has been in a dreary situation in a school since uncle's death, because she is determined to be independent" (6.1.376). Tom, too, associates Maggie's cleverness with her drive for independence, but he represents both as improper for the young lady of the middle classes he wishes her to be. His bitterness at Maggie's playful volunteering to teach him book-keeping, "*You* teach! Yes, I daresay. That's always the tone you take," expands into a harangue against her intellectual conceit as an attempt to usurp his rightful masculine role as head of the family (3.5.260). "You're always setting yourself up above me and everyone else," he asserts, denouncing her cleverness as inadequate and her conceit as self-deceit, "You think you know better than any one, but you're almost always wrong" (3.5.261). This denigration of Maggie's judgment or knowledge enables Tom to assert his

male power. He admonishes Maggie, "[Y]ou should leave it to me to take care of my mother and you and not put yourself forward . . . . I can judge much better than you can" (3.5.261). Here Tom subdues what he views as Maggie's challenge of his patriarchal authority by questioning the source of her independence, her ability to "know" and to "judge." In doing so, he draws a connection between Maggie's ambition for power and her learning and censures both.

Tom again connects Maggie's learning to an inappropriate independence in his later censure, "[Y]ou have no judgment and self-command; and yet you think you know best, and will not submit to be guided" (6.4.400). Her recent return from her position at a girls' school and his subsequent reference to her teaching, "you know I didn't wish you to take a situation," frames his disapproval of her character with his disapproval of her occupation (6.4.400). Tom further associates Maggie's refusal to "submit to be guided" with her refusal to live "respectably among . . . relations" according to his "wish . . . [that] my sister . . . be a lady," implying that Maggie's independence puts her at odds with respectability, ladylikeness, and therefore femininity. The implication that Maggie's self-definition as clever fosters her independence and so produces, or at least contributes to, her irregular femininity, reinforces the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality that Tom has policed from childhood. Moreover, Tom's attribution of Maggie's unfeminine self-assertion and independence to her learning indicates that Maggie's estimation of herself as clever leads to not only her displacement from conventional femininity but also the society that determines those conventions.

## "[M]ORE MISCHIEF NOR GOOD WI' THE BOOKS": MAGGIE'S DOUBLE-BIND

The opposition that Tom identifies between Maggie and respectable womanhood recapitulates his youthful certainty that girls cannot learn Latin. Both judgments fix learning and femininity as incompatible: Tom's childhood belief determines that femininity (the fact of being a girl) makes one incapable of advanced learning, and his adult judgment declares that Maggie's intellect (the root of her stubborn independence) disqualifies her from conventional young-ladyship. With these judgments, Tom proves himself a good representative of the society he works to enter, as he rehearses arguments about biological incapacity and social unsuitability that began in the 1820s and gained much ground by the 1860s.[121] Tom's rigid determinism, which pits Maggie's learning against her membership in the gender community of conventional femininity, encapsulates the double-bind that shapes her life.

Indeed, the myriad terms by which other scholars have defined this opposition of acceptance and exceptionality testifies to its centrality not only to Maggie's story, but to the novel as a whole. Perhaps the most prevalent iteration is that of a conflict between individual and society, as in George Levine's binary of "public opinion and individual sensibility" (405) and Kate Flint's opposition of "the claims of an individual to wider social demands" (163). Kristie Allen injects the mind into this binary, suggesting that Maggie's identity is ultimately the product of the "dialectical relationship between

[121] From the early decades of the century, female education was commonly presented as concerned primarily with training women to be capable wives and mothers. This definition of education as training women for the home persisted though the 1860s, as the prevailing justification for secondary and higher education as better training for those roles suggests. By the middle of the 1850s, medico-biological studies of female physiology begin to gain popular visibility, as Eliot's 1854 "Woman of France" implies. The influence of these types of discourses only grew in the 1860s and 1870s. For a more detailed discussion of these contemporary discourses, see chapter one.

individual habits and the mental level of St. Ogg's" (383). These readings of the individual/society binary inform my articulation of Maggie's double-bind by reinforcing the fact that Maggie's development is always contained by society. However, the individual/society binary obscures what I find to be an essential component of Maggie's double-bind: her fitful acceptance of society's dictates. June Szirotny's articulation of the novel as dramatizing "the conflict between self-realization and acceptance" more closely aligns with my understanding of Maggie's dilemma, but privileges the self-determined, exceptional self in a way that my reading finds unworkable (179).[122] My reading of Maggie's double-bind adds a node to this critical tradition by emphasizing education as a tool of social formation as well as of individual development, which is perpetually working to blur the dividing line between individual and society.

Maggie's vexed understanding of herself and her place in society, I argue, stems from this double-bind, in which she is caught between education's capacity to facilitate membership in a community and to reinforce an individual's exceptionality or difference from that community. Crucially, the double-bind and Maggie's experience of it define education broadly. It encompasses not only Tom's formal, classical schooling and Maggie's attempt to join it, but also the transmission of social and cultural knowledge as well as the kinds of occupational training Tom and Maggie undertake as young adults. My readings of Maggie's double-bind emphasize it as starkly binary, reflecting Maggie's idiosyncratic, restricted apprehension of her learning and her life. However, I believe that

[122] Other telling labels include McDonough's opposition of "tradition and innovation" (52) and Ermarth's identification of the conflict as "between aspiration and fact" (599).

the novel locates the anguish and tragedy of Maggie's negotiations with the double-bind as the result of her cultural-historical position.

Tom's experience of the uselessness of his classical training and his subsequent vocational training in practical, commercial knowledge dramatizes an evolving concept of education to fit the evolving industrializing, professionalizing world of the 1820s. Tom models the transition from learning as a tool for social formation to education as training the individual his future profession. As a man, acquainted with both types of education and the capital (social and otherwise) to act on his training, Tom evades, to a practical extent, the double-bind that Maggie cannot. As a woman, Maggie's experience of this educational transition is necessarily limited. Female patterns and ideals of education remained much more tied to concerns with social formation throughout the century, as signaled by the emphasis on ladylike accomplishments and wifely skills. Moreover, the professional opportunities for women remained few, In fact, woman's primary professional option, governessing, remained tied to ideals of social formation as Maggie's acknowledgment that she "shall never get a better situation without more accomplishments" illustrates (6.2.382). By virtue of her historical-cultural condition as a woman in the 1820s and her identification with learning, Maggie is unable to escape the double-bind those conditions and that learning generate. Before examining the effects of this double-bind on Maggie's development, I want to elucidate its terms by demonstrating her participation in both.

The first term in this double-bind, Maggie's perception of learning as a means of engendering and entering a community, most often registers in the novel as an aversion to

being kept in ignorance. For example, when Tom excludes Maggie by only allowing Lucy to "come along" to see the toads, Maggie determines to follow. Her motive for doing so is less to join their party than to learn what they learn, framing her exclusion from their community as an exclusion from knowledge (1.10.138). The fact "that Tom and Lucy should do or see anything of which she was ignorant would . . . be . . . an intolerable idea to Maggie" indicates her construction of a community between Tom and Lucy based on shared knowledge of what they "do" and what they "see" (1.10.139). Her feeling of isolation hinges on this perception of ignorance, and her impulse to follow the pair--and to push Lucy into the mud--articulates the intensity of her need to know and thus to belong.[123]

Maggie's reaction to Aunt Pullet's display of her new bonnet exemplifies this perception of knowledge as the means of entering a community. This ceremony, which Fraiman convincingly reads as "a kind of ritual initiation into the ways of womanhood" (132), conveys to Maggie "that there was some painful mystery about her aunt's bonnet which she was considered too young to understand" (1.9.130). Maggie's reading of this event as a "mystery" again articulates her exclusion from a community (here, adult femininity) in terms of knowledge (1.9.130). The bonnet's significance remains inscrutable despite Maggie's "attentive" efforts to understand it because she is judged "too young" to be given access to the explanatory knowledge. Maggie's ambition to know, and accordingly to be accepted, glosses over the significance of age or maturity to

[123] Tom's pointing out of a water-snake to Lucy serves as Maggie's immediate incitement to push her. I argue that Maggie's feeling that "she *must* see it too" explains her action as much as her unhappiness at Tom's favoritism (1.10.140). Perhaps Lucy was blocking Maggie's view?

this mystery. Instead, she presents it as a matter of learning alone in her indignant consciousness "that she could have understood that, as well as everything else, if she had been taken into confidence" (1.9.130). Her indignation here constructs the transmission of information as a being "taken into confidence," an act suggestive of intimacy and mutual dependence that underscores Maggie's definition of learning as the means of entering a community.

Education's capacity to serve as the gateway to community membership, which Tom's gentlemanly education at King's Lorton ratifies, paradoxically reinforces Maggie's displacement from the social expectations of her community, for she has not had the benefit of the education that would shape her into a proper female and thus a proper social citizen. Taken out of Miss Firniss's school at thirteen and "shut out from the world by her father's misfortunes" until young adulthood, Maggie has not received the full education that would make her a young lady in the eyes of St. Ogg's (5.5.359). In fact, the novel's project of dramatizing the historical forces of industrialization in which woman transitions from a member of an integrated family economy to being "sequestered in her own Victorian 'private sphere'" foregrounds the importance of social definitions of gender to Maggie's experience (Homans 170). Maggie's negotiation of femininity therefore grapples with a society increasingly invested in distinguishing between "male" and "female" in myriad aspects of life, including education. Lacking the learning that would signal her as a "finished" young lady and give her an identifiable position in the community, Maggie's intellectual ambitions and self-education put her farther out of

touch with contemporary expectations of femininity, exacerbating her alienation from it and the society that prescribes it.

This alienation and its grounding in Maggie's education registers the second term of her double-bind: learning's capacity to reinforce difference from one's community. Tom's complaint that Maggie is "always setting . . . [her]self up above . . .everyone else" because of her cleverness crucially defines Maggie's liminal position outside or at odds with her community (3.5.261). He repeats this definition when he invokes respectability and femininity as the characteristics Maggie eschews in becoming a teacher. "You know I didn't wish you to take a situation," he reminds her, "I wished my sister to be a lady" (6.4.400-01). Learning and teaching thus differentiate Maggie from her society by giving her an alternate social definition, for Tom's use of the past tense "wished" indicates that, as a teacher, Maggie cannot be a "lady."

However, Tom's negative perception of Maggie's difference is balanced by Maggie's association of her learning with exceptionality. Maggie's daydreams of escape from the mill and St. Ogg's illustrate how her self-concept as clever shades into a perception of herself as exceptional. For example, her imagination that Walter Scott will assist her once he discovers "how wretched and how clever she was" positions her as inherently worthy of the attention and aid of great men (4.3.308). Her vision of "herself honored for her surprising attainments" in classical scholarship similarly connects Maggie's sense of exceptionality to her faculty for learning (4.3.307). Maggie's fantasies of setting herself apart from her community via her learning demonstrate how her perception of herself as clever emphasizes her difference and detachment from her

society. Maggie's dependence on her cleverness functions to distance her from the female community represented by her mother and the Dodson aunts, for it accents her likeness to her father and the Tullivers. This contradictory effect of her self-identification, that it aligns her with masculine traits and patriarchal inheritance instead of matriarchal inheritance and feminine traits, exemplifies how gender inflects Maggie's experience of the double-bind, especially in terms of her inhabitance of conventional femininity.

Maggie's struggle with this double-bind is inseparable from her struggle to negotiate or accept conventional femininity. *The Mill on the Floss* presents Maggie as entering a society that aligns womanliness with beauty, selflessness, and domestic, familial service. As if to underscore the association between femininity and wifehood, the novel twice employs the trope of a man contemplating his choice of a wife to articulate St. Ogg's ideal of womanhood. Tulliver's explanation that he married Bessy Dodson "because she wasn't o'er 'cute--bein' a good-looking woman too, an' come of a rare family for managing," establishes beauty ("good-looking"), domesticity ("managing"), and familial or social status ("come of a rare family") as central to conventional femininity (1.3.63). Stephen similarly acknowledges the desirability of beauty, breeding, and the accomplishments that connote domesticity in the leisured classes, musing that a "man likes his wife to be pretty . . . . A man likes his wife to be accomplished, gentle affectionate, and not stupid; and Lucy had all these qualifications" (6.1.380). Stephen's choice of Lucy for his wife proves that these criteria of desirable femininity apply equally

to the young, mercantile, upper-middle-class strata of St. Ogg's society as to the older, agricultural middle class represented by Tulliver, generating a universal femininity.[124]

Stephen's and Tulliver's assessments ratify the universal definition of femininity by aligning it with the most important index of femininity: marriageability. Her family's persistent anxiety about Maggie's marriageability thus indicates their perception of her intellect as a lack of the femininity that marriage seals. This anxiety clearly underlies Mrs. Tulliver's and her sisters' association of Maggie's cleverness with her unconventional appearance as well as their association of her appearance with her marital prospects. Mrs. Tulliver connects Maggie's mental powers with her dark skin, noting that the girl's intellect "niver run i' my family . . . no more nor a brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter" (1.2.57). Mrs. Tulliver's complaints about Maggie's dark skin and unruly hair generate a definition of femininity based on beauty and gentility. For example, her complaint about the vagaries of inheritance, "It seems hard that my sister Deane should have that pretty child" because "Lucy takes more after me nor my own child does," signals the extent to which she associates beauty with identity and family. Furthermore, she associates conventional beauty with conventional morality, explaining to Lucy that "when I was young a brown skin wasn't thought well on among respectable

[124] Critics have read these mirrored matrimonial choices as reflecting the prevailing "patriarchal view of woman as fungible" (Sopher par. 10). For example, Ermarth reads the fact that "Mr. Tulliver and Stephen Guest look for a certain weakness when choosing their spouses" as proof that most "men in the novel have a deep, unselfconscious belief that they are innately superior to women" (589). Sopher tracks this superiority to a belief in women as interchangeable, identifying the "similarity" between Tulliver's and Stephen's criteria for a wife as "in the belief that there is little to differentiate one woman from another . . . . Stephen's 'choice' of Lucy parallels Mr Tulliver's choice of his wife from among the Dodson sisters, in that he chooses first that he will marry one of them, and only selects Bessy after this decision, just as Stephen chooses Lucy as an avatar of the kind of woman upon whom he has already settled" (par 10).

folks" (6.2.393). Her association of skin color with respectability aligns beauty with both feminine desirability and social conformity.

Mrs. Tulliver's sisters take up and extend this relation between Maggie's cleverness and her lack of feminine beauty. For example, Aunt Pullet maintains that Maggie's complexion makes her appear "more like a gypsy nor ever" and that "it'll stand in her way i' life to be so brown" (1.7.109). Moreover, her hope that boarding school, if it can "not prevent her being so brown . . . . might tend to subdue some other vices in her," similarly casts Maggie's brown body as the physical manifestation of her "other vices" (1.3.166). To the Dodsons, whom Bonaparte identifies as the novel's mouthpiece for "the society not only of St. Ogg's, but of the prevailing English temper," Maggie's "mulatter" appearance embodies (and, perhaps, compounds) her distance from conventional femininity (65).

Maggie's self-concept as clever partly insulates her from the femininity she does not physically embody. Yet her response to her family's feminine ideal suggests that this self-concept comes about in response to an acute comprehension of the social conventions that define femininity. Maggie's most explicitly formulated self-definition as clever positions her cleverness as a substitute for a beauty she feels is "out of the question" for her: "[S]he didn't want her hair to look pretty--that was out of the question--she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl, and not to find fault with her" (1.7.105). Her rejection of beauty in favor of cleverness suggests that she views her intellect as her best alternative to beauty, a tactic that her childhood hair-cutting reveals. John Bushnell reads Maggie's hair cut as "inspired by a need to destroy the unruliness

which distinguishes her from her painfully narrow family" (388), a capitulation to specifically familial standards. I argue that cutting her hair represents a capitulation to as much as a defiance of social definitions of femininity, for Maggie generates and then enacts a self-concept that eschews conventional beauty only because she believes that "to look pretty . . . was out of the question."

Maggie's later comparison of herself to Lucy further signals her internalization of the conventional standard of femininity. Her skepticism that she, with her "want of all accomplishments, could be a rival of dear little Lucy, who knows and does all sorts of charming things, and is ten times prettier" testifies to Maggie's association of desirable womanliness with beauty, charm, and the conventional markers of educated femininity, accomplishments (5.4.348). To Maggie, blonde and delicate Lucy is so eminently feminine--and so eminently marriageable--that she cannot conceive of herself as Lucy's romanic rival.

Maggie's representation of Lucy as possessed of "all accomplishments" and knowing "charming things" reiterates the novel's representation of education as capable of inculcating gender in its implication that a different education from Lucy's contributes to Maggie's displacement from femininity. Maggie's reading and self-education not only cover over her lack of feminine education but also reinforce her disinterest in feminine roles and duties (4.3.307). In addition to her childhood distaste for patchwork, household chores, and personal grooming, which signal Maggie's resistance to the concerns of domestic femininity, Maggie's increased home usefulness after she turns from Tom's textbooks to Thomas à Kempis reveals that learning distracts her from her feminine,

familial obligations. Laying aside Virgil and Euclid in favor of religious fervor, Maggie approaches ideal femininity. She ends her isolated study and spends much of her time in the parlor with her family, "[h]anging diligently over her sewing" (4.3.314). In this newfound domesticity, Maggie becomes conventionally beautiful, "a sight any one might have been pleased to look at" (4.3.314). More than beautiful, she becomes a helpmeet, "so submissive, so backward to assert her own will" and anxious to do "anything that would soothe her mother [and father], and cheer their long day together" (4.3.314). Maggie's abandonment of intellectual pursuits facilitates her assumption of the helpmeet's domestic service and selflessness. If, as Hottle suggests, "it is only after her attempts to teach herself from Tom's books have been interrupted by the attention she must pay to her domestic duties" that Maggie begins her religious study, then her increasing embodiment of conventional femininity during her religious renunciation proves the incompatibility of learning and domestic femininity (38).

Just as domestic duties interrupt Maggie's studies, leading her to take up Thomas à Kempis instead, so does intellectual ambition disrupt Maggie's ability to contentedly undertake those domestic duties. She positions thinking and learning as antithetical to her satisfaction with this feminine role. In admitting to Phillip that she has given up "everything I cared for when I was a child," including her "old books," Maggie opposes learning to her role as daughter-at-home. Furthermore, she tells him that when in a "discontented" frame of mind, "I have gone on thinking till it has seemed to me that I could think away all my duty," amplifying her claim that learning disinterests her from her feminine roles (5.1.319). Maggie again characterizes learning as distracting her from

her daughterly duties in her attempt to end her meetings with Phillip in the Red Deeps. She calls his lending of books and their discussions "very sweet" but persists in identifying this engagement with learning as unsettling her performance of home-useful femininity, telling him that "it has made me restless: it has made me think a great deal about the world; and I have impatient thoughts again--I get weary of my home" (5.3.350).

Maggie's guilt at the restlessness and impatience engendered by Phillip's tuition, her feeling "cut . . . to the heart, afterwards, that I should ever have felt weary of my father and mother," registers her internalization of the social definition of femininity that casts the daughter of the house as helpmeet (5.3.350). Moreover, it functions as Maggie's acknowledgment that she cannot embody the role she feels she should. Though she accepts her community's ideal of womanhood, striving to fulfill it and to be fulfilled by it, Maggie ultimately cannot inhabit it. Like her earlier confession of her tendency to "think away all my duty," Maggie's renunciation of Phillip's company and his books amounts to an admission that learning unfits her for her feminine domestic duties by turning her mind and satisfaction from them.[125]

The dissatisfaction with herself voiced in Maggie's renunciation of Phillip captures the double-bind at the heart of her experience of femininity, for it positions her

[125] Written just months after the publication of *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot's "Brother Jacob" (1864) again presents learning as turning a woman against her feminine duties. Mrs. Steele, the woman "who first gave way to temptation" and patronized Mr. Freely's confectionary and pastry shop, has, the narrative "fear[s,] . . . been rather over-educated for her station in life, for she knew by heart many passages in 'Lala Rookh,' the 'Corsair,' and the 'Siege of Corinth,' which had given her a distaste for domestic occupations" (2.60). Though the narrative's ironic, bemused tone and its definition of her over-education as the memorization of popular, somewhat melodramatic poetry casts this "fear" and Mrs. Steele's gender deviation as mostly jest, the fact that these consecutive works define education as unfitting or disinteresting women from their conventional duties and interests indicates the extent to which this concern was taken in earnest at the time of their publication.

as caught between two conceptions of herself. Maggie can neither fully renounce her learning and embrace domestic femininity nor fully embrace her cleverness and renounce her feminine duty to her family. Maggie's identification with learning thus functions as both a substitute for and a barrier to her assumption of conventional femininity. Just as she wishes others to think her clever because she believes that conventional beauty is unattainable, Maggie's ambivalent performance of domestic daughterhood reveals her incompatibility with the social community whose directives she has internalized but cannot completely enact (on) herself.

Maggie's sense of herself as at odds with conventional femininity because of her learning extends to a displacement from the community of St. Ogg's. Her mental distance coordinates with her physical isolation, for Tulliver's ruin and illness keeps Maggie "shut out from the world by her father's misfortunes" (5.5.359). Maggie's lonely, dreary days at the mill prompt a parallel retreat from the real world altogether into fantasy and literature. Her love of books becomes, in her isolation, a craving for "absorbing fancies . . . all Scott's novels and all Byron's poems," in which she "might have found happiness enough to dull her sensibility to her actual daily life" (4.3.306). Maggie's retreat from reality and society via her books compounds her alienation from the society of St. Ogg's by further distancing her from the instruction in and inhabitance of conventional femininity that would mark her as part of the community. I argue here that Maggie's lack of exposure to the community of St. Ogg's amplifies her intellectually grounded alienation from femininity. Her isolation contributes to a perception of her as unfeminine by keeping her out of touch with the conventions that make femininity. Yet it can also be

understood as reinforcing Maggie's femininity by keeping her in the home. Tom's assertion that he can judge better than Maggie because he is a man and "goes out into the world" implies that respectable, ladylike sisters do not go out into the world (6.4.401). By this logic, Maggie's isolation at the mill functions as a mark of her femininity. Again, Maggie is caught in a double-bind.

Maggie's physical and mental detachment from St. Ogg's contributes to the perception of her as out of place when she reenters society in Lucy's care. For example, the narrative excuses "Poor Maggie" on the grounds that "[s]he was so unused to society that she could take nothing as a matter of course," noting that her social ignorance makes her "necessarily appear absurd to more experienced ladies" (6.2.387). Indeed, the "experienced ladies" are quick to conclude that Maggie's "abruptness and unevenness of manner [are] . . . plainly the result of her secluded and lowly circumstances" (6.6.408). The Misses Guest and their followers particularly object to Maggie's "way of not assenting at once to the observations current in good society, and of saying that she didn't know whether those observations were true or not, which gave her an air of *gaucherie*" (6.6.407). This perception of Maggie as *gauche* because she privileges knowledge (knowing "whether those observations were true or not") over appearance or convention recalls her earlier determination to be thought clever because she is not beautiful. Moreover, it establishes that her alienation from the conventions of society entails an alienation from femininity. In addition to her *gaucherie*, Maggie is viewed as "so entirely without those pretty airs of coquetry which have the traditional reputation of driving men to despair" that she garners not enmity but "feminine pity for being so ineffective in spite

of her beauty" (6.6.407). Lacking the "pretty airs" or social graces transmitted through the "tradition" of conventional female education, Maggie is judged "ineffective" at womanhood's central task and consequently as incompletely feminine. St. Ogg's society continues to register Maggie as not quite feminine, finding "something rather bold in Miss Tulliver's direct gaze, and something undefinably course in the style of her beauty" (6.9.436). The later condemnation of Maggie for "unwomanly boldness" reveals the extent to which "bold" and "feminine" function as antonyms in the social vocabulary of St. Ogg's (7.2.489).

If St. Ogg's perceives Maggie as incompletely or ineffectively feminine before her affair with Stephen, it brands her as wholly unfeminine after it. By consistently reducing her to a "girl" (perhaps all the better to scold her), community consensus strips Maggie of maturity and ascribes to her a childish selfishness antithetical to womanly selflessness. The judgment that "there had always been something in Miss Tulliver's very physique that a refined instinct felt to be prophetic of harm" positions Maggie's body as the signal, if not the source, of her "unwomanly" nature, suggesting that the appellation "girl" also works to deny the sexual connotation of Maggie's transgression. Crucially, one woman's allegation that "Maggie's mind must be of a quality with which *she* . . . could not risk any contact" explicitly locates Maggie's dangerous lack of femininity in her mind (7.4.503). This judgment of Maggie's mind as tainted by, or the source of, her transgression recapitulates the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality that undergirds St. Ogg's definition of womanhood and traps Maggie in the double-bind of her desire for community and her sense of exceptionality from it.

Not even her death can resolve the double-bind that animates Maggie's plot of development, for critical disagreement over its meaning--as well as its artistic and didactic success--effectively suspends Maggie in a limbo between tragic regression and triumphant self-actualization. I believe that the rich ambiguity of Maggie's ending speaks to the primacy of the tension between the individual's sense of self and her want of social acceptance for the novel's representation not only of female learning but of female identity more broadly. Indeed, it is Maggie's very lack of "balance" that makes her the novel's heroine, for if she had been

> a thoroughly well-educated young lady, with a perfectly balanced mind, who had had all the advantages of fortune, training, and refined society . . . you would probably have known nothing about her: her life would have had so few vicissitudes that it could hardly have been written; for the happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history. (6.3.393-94)

The narrative's claim here recalls the association of femininity and lack of narratability that *Bleak House*'s Esther Summerson negotiates. Significantly, whereas *Bleak House* desires that Esther "have no history" because the ideal woman is entirely subsumed in her domestic, familial service, *The Mill on the Floss* can relate Maggie's history not because she is "fallen" but because she is not "thoroughly well-educated." Thus, Maggie becomes a model, in the sense that the mid-Victorian novel stimulates readerly identification with the protagonist, because she is *not* a model, not the pattern "well-educated young lady, with a perfectly balanced mind, who had had all the advantages of fortune, training, and refined society."[126]

[126] Green, in her examination of Simone de Beauvoir's identification with Maggie, argues that "realist narratives of female development" particularly "solicit and depend upon readers' connections with characters who seem to offer likeness as a point of identification" (60). My readings of Yonge's *The Daisy*

Yet it is just this ability of Maggie to engender identification that marks her as transgressive both inside and outside the novel, troubling her fitness as a model and again reinforcing the tension between community acceptance and exceptionality. Within the novel, the public anxiety about "the taint of her presence, extremely dangerous to daughters" constructs the danger Maggie poses as eminently one of engendering identification, that the town's daughters will follow her example (7.2.490). This fear positions Maggie as simultaneously creating a community of the daughters who are in danger of identifying with her and as a dangerous outsider who would "taint" with (and is tainted by) her difference.

Outside the novel, Dinah Mulock's 1861 review for *Macmillan's* centers on a similar anxiety about Maggie's potential to be a model for "the hundreds of clever girls, born of uncongenial parents of the Dodson sort" who may see themselves in Maggie (157).[127] Mulock frames her critique of the novel's "perilous doctrine . . . of overpowering circumstances" in terms of those clever girls, questioning, "*Will* it help these--such a picture as *Maggie* . . . . Will it influence for good any other real lives" (157-58). With these questions, Mulock depicts readerly identification with Maggie as a given, testifying to Maggie's power as an example to generate community. However, though the question of influence raised here indicates that the novel speaks to society, the review's

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*Chain* and *The Clever Woman of the Family* and, to a lesser degree, Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, invoke a similar understanding of the heroine's narrative as involving a "didactic identification" that encourages the reader to view the heroine as a model for her own development.

[127] Showalter's depiction of *The Mill on the Floss*'s exclusion from "Victorian schoolrooms" as having "much to do with implied criticism of monogamy, the marriage-market, and the obstacles placed in the paths of intelligent women" suggests that Mulock's anxiety was a common one at mid-century (161).

censure of Maggie as a model for "other real lives" implies a reading of Maggie as transgressive, as not speaking for society. Mulock's conclusion, that it "is not right to paint *Maggie* only as she is in her strong, unsatisfied, erring youth--and leave her there, her doubts unresolved, her passions unregulated, her faults unatoned and unforgiven," locates Maggie's transgressive exceptionality in her arrested development: she should not be a model for women because she does not finally become one (160).

Negotiating a world conspicuously lacking in models of femininity for a girl who feels that she "shall be a *clever* woman," Maggie develops a divided self-concept that dramatizes the learning or learned woman's liminal position in conventional society (2.1.183). This self-division cannot be ameliorated by her death--in death, she is still divided--for Maggie's tenacious adherence to learning as essential to her identity and her sense of social value generates the ambition and yearning that enable her history to be written. Ultimately, the alienation Maggie experiences as a girl consciously trying to become a clever women produces her existence, for without her struggle for learning, "you would probably have known nothing about her: her life . . . could hardly have been written" (6.3.393-94).

# Chapter 6: Alice's Instruction in *Wonderland* and the Threat of Female Educational Ambition

"How the creatures order one about, and make one repeat lessons! . . . I might just as well be at school at once," grouses Alice, perhaps the most famous avatar of Victorian girlhood and the eponymous heroine of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) (*W* 10.82).[128] Alice's complaint characterizes Wonderland not as a space of wonder, but of instruction. She is not so much on holiday from her lessons as on a field trip. If, as Nina Auerbach has proposed, the *Alice* books are "[f]or many of us . . . the first glimpse into Victorian England" and Alice our first "image of the Victorian middle-class child," then I would assert that Victorian England and the Victorian middle-class child seem, for many of us, remarkably concerned with learning (31). This chapter follows Alice's own sense of her adventures as saturated with lessons to examine how, by bringing Alice's learning into contact with Wonderland and Looking-Glass land, the *Alice* books create a space in which to critically examine female education.

Like Maggie Tulliver in Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Alice possesses a precocious intellect and a desire for learning that upsets social expectations of girlhood and femininity. The previous chapter read Maggie's struggle to adult womanhood as the outcome of the double-bind inherent in her engagement with learning. Maggie's perception of education as both generating community and affirming her own individual

[128] Both books were published (as one volume works) by Macmillan in November 1865 and December 1871 respectively. For the reader's convenience, I will subsequently reference the books as *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. In-text citations will use only initials, e.g. (*W* 2.15) or (*LG* 3.136).

exceptionality lead to a divided identity and an inability to acclimate to her society. *The Mill on the Floss* presents Maggie's cleverness as central to her self-definition and to her process of maturation, yet the novel's failure to reconcile clever Maggie to her community speaks to the liminal position of the learned woman in the mid-Victorian decades. Maggie's final status as transgressor of social and gender mores embodies the incompatibility between femininity and intellectuality that animates her self-divisive double-bind.

Maggie and Alice also share "that queer little toss of her head, to keep back the wandering hair that *would* always get into her eyes" (*W* 12.98).[129] Yet unlike Maggie, Alice does not grow up over the course of her adventures. She remains a pre-pubescent child whose adulthood lies beyond the narrative.[130] As Harry Levin claims, "She is a little girl once more when she awakens" from her dreams (186). However, Alice's youth does not keep the *Alice* books from articulating an ideal of feminine womanhood and suggesting that Alice will one day embody it. This chapter argues that a central component of the books' concern with female education is the belief that a girl's learning should promote her future womanhood.

In addition to advocating that female education teach feminine skills and knowledge, I read the *Alice* books as portraying girlhood and, ultimately, womanhood as

[129] Maggie is "incessantly tossing her head to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes" (Eliot *Mill* 1.2.57-58)

[130] Though I show below that the narrative frames of Alice's dream-adventures do cast forward to her adulthood, these visions of Alice as "a grown woman" are presented as imaginary (*W* 12.99). For critical arguments on Alice's lack of development, see Gordon's supposition that "since she continually repeats the same or similar mistakes, it could be said that Alice may not mature at all during the course of her explorations" (26) as well as Reinstein's evaluation that "Alice ends her adventures neither older nor wiser" (177).

incompatible with advanced, intellectual learning. This chapter examines how the books depict education as capable of turning girls' attention away from their proper goals and of deranging the female body and mind in such a way as to jeopardize their gender. As a whole, my readings foreground how *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* evince not only skepticism about female capacity for learning but also, more importantly, anxiety that study will damage and unsex the intellectually ambitious girl.

This fear of the intellectually ambitious girl or woman educating herself out of femininity became a central, often sensational, feature of later mid-Victorian public discourse on female education. Such fears especially arose in concert with the opening of higher education to women, a phenomenon I discuss in chapter one. A resident of Christ Church, Oxford, from his undergraduate matriculation in 1850 until his death in 1898, Charles Dodgson, pen name Lewis Carroll, was not only exposed to discourses of female education, but took an active role in theorizing and practicing it. Though I do not want to read Dodgson's personal opinions and actions as keys to the *Alice* books, I believe some biographical context is instructive for understanding *Wonderland*'s and *Through the Looking-Glass*'s representations of Alice's learning.[131]

"Girls are *very* nice pupils to lecture to, they are so bright and eager," Dodgson once wrote, and his teaching record shows a life-long engagement with girls' education (*Letters* 2:680). For example, at the National School at Croft in the summer of 1855,

[131] The books' emphasis on their origins as tales told for a specific Alice in their prefatory poems encourages biographical readings, which have become a cornerstone (if a contentious one) of the books' critical canon. The sheer number of biographies, critical biographies, and psychoanalytic readings of Dodgson/Carroll and the *Alice* books, along with the many editions of his letters and diaries, attests to the continuing importance of biography in *Alice* scholarship. Sigler's survey "Lewis Carroll Studies, 1983-2003" for the *Dickens Studies Annual* usefully traces the biographical strain of Carroll criticism.

Dodgson's "regular work" was "with the second class girls," whom he taught Monday through Thursday (*Diaries* 1:114). During his early years as Lecturer at Christ Church, he prepared and graded mathematics examinations for Cheltenham Ladies' College (*Diaries* 4:203). Near the end of his career, Dodgson tutored and formally lectured students at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, in mathematical logic. In June 1886, Dodgson records that he "went to Lady Margaret Hall, and lectured for about an hour, on Logic, to about twenty-five young ladies" and their schoolmistress, inaugurating a vocation that continued until some months before his death (*Diaries* 8:279). His logic course eventually extended beyond Oxford's women's colleges to the local girls' high school. In addition to formal teaching, Dodgson encouraged young women of his acquaintance to higher learning by offering financial assistance, examination preparation, or by lending books.

Yet this eagerness to teach or to assist female learning belies Dodgson's fundamental anxiety about female fitness, both mental and physical, for advanced study. He campaigned against resident women students at Oxford as jeopardizing the university's primary mission of educating young men as well as the health and morals of the potential women students. In his 1896 pamphlet on "Resident Women Students," Dodgson contends that the mutual influence of male and female students "would be for *evil*, at any rate for the young *women*" (372). Moreover, the pamphlet alleges that co-education at the university level opens the way for "the introduction into our ancient University, of that social monster, the 'He-Woman'" (373). This vision of the university-educated woman as unsexed, a "He-Woman," registers a deep-seated fear of learning's

effects on a woman's essential femininity. Dodgson's belief that study can corrupt the body as well as the mind is also evident in his testimony during an 1884 debate on "proposed admission of women to some of the Honor Schools" in which Dodgson, as he later recorded in his diary, "quoted from Mayo's *Health* about a doctor who attended a large girls' school, where the large majority had spinal curvature" in response to "(so-called) evidence as to the health of girls not suffering from the modern 'High' education" (*Diaries* 8:94).

Dodgson's concerns with the health of his female friends and students stress a perception of the female body and mind as incompatible with advanced learning. In fact, he applied this belief to many girls of his acquaintance, diagnosing ill-health caused by too much mental labor in many of his young female friends. For example, he attributed Margie Dymes' taciturnity to her having "had her brain overworked" (*Diaries* 7:282) and identified Ethel Arnold's "suffering from St. Vitus' Dance and a heart . . . (nervously, not organically) affected" as "a strong instance of the evils of severe head-work for girls" (*Diaries* 7:428). Dodgson also worried that "severe-head work" would damage a girl's mental faculties, as in Edith Rowell's recollection that when she proposed to "work for the Final Honors School Examination in Mathematics at Oxford," he urgently protested that "the work was far too exacting and would impose a strain which might even upset my mental balance!" (133). Dodgson's concern with the physical and mental derangement caused by "severe head-work" indicates his attention to contemporary pedagogical, medical, and social discourses on female education, as corroborated by his reference to "Mayo's *Health*." By demonstrating the *Alice* books' engagement with their

cultural-historical *milieu*, this brief biographical context illuminates the topicality of what are often read as ahistorical, rebellious, and subversive texts.

### "I SHOULD *LIKE* TO BE A QUEEN, BEST": DEFINING AND LEARNING FEMININITY IN THE *ALICE* BOOKS

As subversive as their dream-adventures appear, *Wonderland* and *Though the Looking-Glass* espouse an ideal of womanhood that aligns closely with conventional concepts of middle- and upper-class femininity. In this section, I explore how, through their frame narratives and "bad" female characters, the *Alice* books generate a vision of grown-up womanhood that defines the truly feminine as domestic and maternal. The narratives that frame Alice's adventures similarly frame Alice, positioning her within a network of domesticity suggested by Jennifer Geer's characterization of the frames as attempting "to fix Alice' s adventures and their child readers ever more firmly within idealized domestic spaces" (4). This domestic network situates Alice not only within the upper-middle-class home, with its tea time and drawing-rooms, but also within the ideology of woman as mother and helpmeet. In both books, the frame narratives depict "good" womanhood as domestic and maternal. Though the *Wonderland* frames take place outdoors--Alice is "sitting by her sister on the bank" (*W* 1.7)--the girls' use of the riverside as a spot for leisurely reading from which Alice will just "run in to [her] . . . tea" domesticates the outdoor space (*W* 12.98). Both girls act as if the bank were another drawing-room. The *Looking-Glass* frames similarly place Alice in the home, settling her in the "great armchair" of the drawing-room (*LG* 1.107).

Recent critical attention to the *Alice* books' frames has tended to read their domesticity as recasting Alice's dream-adventures into preparations for her assumption of adult femininity, what Sarah Gilead identifies as an effort to "put Alice into an adult 'frame'" (283). Similarly, Geer finds that "[t]he prefatory poem and closing reverie domesticate Alice's chaotic adventures" (5). Geer further reads the frames as linking Alice's happy childhood to proper womanhood: "The *Wonderland* frames suggest that the tale of Alice's dream fosters the happy, loving childhood that will enable her development into a good woman and mother, while the *Looking-Glass* frames anticipate that the tale will create a domestic space powerful enough to keep the stormy world at bay" (2). My readings align with Gilead's and Geer's understanding of the narrative frames' power to coerce Alice and the reader into domesticity but focus on the frames' associative power. I argue that by defining female reality--as opposed to the dream-adventures of *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*--as one housed in the upper-middle-class home, the books define femininity itself as domestic.

Moreover, the frames' domesticity serves as a frame for the books' depictions of maternal womanhood. For example, the *Looking-Glass* drawing-room sets the stage for Alice's playing at motherhood with the black kitten, naturalizing her performance in two ways. First, the setting makes Alice's play believable, for such a room commonly served as a children's play space. Second, the domestic space, already associated with femininity, reinforces Alice's participation in that femininity and so casts her maternal game as natural, if not inevitable. In such a setting, Alice's plan to tell the black kitten "all [its] . . . faults" (*LG* 1.108) and her instructions to "attend, Kitty, and not talk so

much" (*LG* 1.110) seem both a natural extension of her own experiences of her mother and governess and a natural preview or preparation for her future role as mother.

In *Wonderland*, the chaos of the dream-adventure must be counterbalanced and contained by an insistence on femininity as a condition of reality. *Wonderland*'s closing frame, frequently read as a repudiation of Alice's adventures, therefore reinserts Alice into the domestic and presents an ideal of the "grown woman" (*W* 12.99). Alice's sister's "dream . . . about little Alice herself," which ends the book, conjures up an ideal of womanhood defined in part by its affinity with children (*W* 12.98). The book's closing image creates woman as one who will "keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood" as well as "gather about her other little children" (*W* 12.99). Woman, as this dream-vision defines her, retains her "own child-life" and generates, or at least attracts, new child-life, effectively defining the "grown woman" in terms of a relationship to children, that is, as maternal. The vision of adult, story-telling Alice as surrounded by children implies that the narration of her dream-adventure expresses future Alice's maternal womanhood. In a sense, then, Alice's *Wonderland* adventures function much like her *Looking-Glass* journey, marking her progress toward a feminine womanhood based in domesticity and maternity.

Inside their frames, both books present examples of womanhood distinctly at odds with the femininity that animates the domestic reality of the frame narratives. Yet these "bad" women, *Wonderland*'s Queen of Hearts and Duchess, and, to a lesser extent, *Through the Looking-Glass*'s Red Queen and White Queen, ultimately reinforce the "good" femininity of the frames through their very "badness." In both books, "bad"

women function as negative examples that mid-Victorian readers would likely perceive as instructive of how not to behave. Such a perception stems from the *Alice* books' grounding in traditions of children's books, a tradition in which the didactic tale, a genre inaugurated by catechisms and primers for holy living, was ubiquitous and influential through the end of the nineteenth century.[132] Often called "looking-glass books," such didactic works, according to Ronald Reichertz, employ "narrative as an exemplary mirror that teaches through either positive models or admonishment" (53). In the didactic tale, or looking-glass book, characters serve as models to be copied or avoided by the reader: "bad" characters thus reinforce "good" behavior. Just as Alice learns from "several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things" not to hold a "red-hot poker" or to "drink . . . from a bottle marked poison," the Queens and the Duchess instruct readers to be meek, humble, maternal women (*W* 1.10-11).

*Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* harness the tension between Alice's dream-adventures and their narrative frames to generate an ideal of femininity that aligns closely with contemporary conceptions of moral, maternal womanhood. Beyond advocating an ideal of womanhood for the reader to learn (in the manner of the looking-glass book), the *Alice* books present Alice herself as subject to such womanhood. Alice's confession that she "should *like* to be a Queen, best" at the outset of her *Looking-Glass* progress bespeaks her internalization of the books' ideal of femininity (*LG* 2.126). In

[132] For a thorough discussion of writing for children prior to the *Alice* books and the books' influences, see Reichertz.

addition to generating a reality grounded in domestic, familial womanhood, the narrative frames of *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* depict Alice in terms of this "real" femininity. *Wonderland's* frames, for example, place Alice in the care of an older sister, a customary agent of feminine socialization in mid-Victorian England.[133] Whether teaching Alice (one wonders if Alice should be attending to "the book her sister was reading") or serving as a role model for her to emulate, her older sister instructs Alice in femininity (*W* 1.7). Moreover, *Wonderland*'s closing frame subjects Alice to its ideal of womanhood by rushing girl-Alice--who, having just woken from her dream, is still closely associated with the anarchic world of Wonderland--off stage. No sooner has Alice finished relating her adventure than her sister dismisses both the dream and the dreamer: "It *was* a curious dream, dear, certainly; but now run in to your tea: it's getting late" (*W* 12.98). In the place of curious girl-Alice, the closing frame substitutes a "grown woman" who employs her "curious dream" to perform her maternal role (*W* 12.99).

The *Looking-Glass* frames similarly construct Alice as less an adventurous girl than a mother-in-training, especially through their presentation of her as babysitter to the black kitten. In fact, Dinah's development to motherhood in the space between *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* itself implies Alice's future maternity for, as U.C. Knoepflmacher and Nina Auerbach have suggested, Dinah serves as a surrogate for Alice. In the *Looking-Glass* frames, Dinah's motherhood prefigures Alice's future role and enables her to practice it on the black kitten. Furthermore, Alice's promise to the

[133] In middle- and upper-middle-class households throughout the nineteenth century, older sisters frequently became teachers of their younger siblings. Families often economized on their daughters' education by sending one girl to school and requiring her to teach her younger siblings upon her return.

black kitten, "All the time you're eating your breakfast, I'll repeat 'The Walrus and the Carpenter' to you," echoes *Wonderland*'s closing image of grown-woman Alice telling tales to her children, exemplifying the books' vision of Alice not as artist or storyteller (as James Suchan and William Madden would have it) but as mother (*LG* 12.208). By presenting Alice's reality as essentially domestic and Alice herself as always chaperoned by more grown-up women--her older sister or maternal Dinah--the narrative frames of the *Alice* books firmly enmesh her within their ideology of femininity.

If, as critics have insisted, Alice takes her waking-life learning and assumptions about society with her into her dream-adventures, "confronting a world out of control by looking for the rules and murmuring her lessons," then I maintain the ideology of femininity to which she is subject equally follows her down the rabbit hole and through the looking-glass (Auerbach 31).[134] Alice begins by chasing a rabbit wearing a waistcoat and falling down a rabbit hole that looks more like a nursery or schoolroom than an animal's den. The majority of *Wonderland* is much the same: through she swims in a pool of tears and wanders through a wood, Alice repeatedly ends up in a home, whether the White Rabbit's bedroom or the Duchess's kitchen. Outdoor spaces similarly take on domestic attributes. The March Hare's *al fresco* tea party turns his lawn into a dining room, and "one of the trees" in the wood has "a door leading right into it" that

[134] See, for example, Blake's vision of Alice "carrying over the Looking-Glass threshold precisely the solicitudes and decorums of the authorities she is leaving behind" (134) and Rackin's characterizations of Alice as persisting "in fruitless attempts to relate her truly 'out-of-the-world' adventures to her previous 'in-the-world' assumptions" (315) or "clinging to her above-ground code of behavior" (318).

communicates with "the long hall" (*W* 7.61).[135] As these scenes indicate, Alice does not so much take domesticity with her into Wonderland as repeatedly come upon it already firmly entrenched there.

In addition to her experience of her dream-adventure as a series of domestic spaces, *Wonderland* presents Alice as working to suit herself for them. Once able to control her "very confusing" changes in size, Alice conscientiously grows or shrinks in order to fit herself to other's expectations (*W* 5.35). In fact, she changes her size in order to fit into their homes. Coming upon "a little house . . . about four feet high," Alice deliberately modifies herself to fit in: "'Whoever lives there,' thought Alice, 'it'll never do to come upon them *this* size: why, I should frighten them out of their wits!' So she began nibbling at the right hand bit [of mushroom] again, and did not venture to go near the house till she has brought herself down to nine inches high" (*W* 5.44). In sight of the March Hare's house, Alice again changes herself to fit in. This time, however, seeing that "it was so large a house," she hesitates to "go nearer till she ha[s] . . . nibbled some more of the left-hand bit of mushroom, and raised herself to about two feet high" (*W* 6.53). In both instances, Alice's premeditated alterations indicate her desire to enter domestic spaces and, more importantly, her understanding that she must grow up or change in

[135] As Heath rightly notes, "Wonderland is a surprisingly conventional and domestic world: public trials in Wonderland are domestic concerns about baked goods, caucus races are rewarded with thimbles, tunnels look like pantries and studies, and most of the adventures are simple afternoon garden party activities" (54). My reading aligns with Heath's sense of harmless domesticity, in contrast to Geer's claim that "[d]omestic order thus disappears in Wonderland: traditionally feminine spaces such as kitchens, croquet grounds, gardens, and tea-tables are infused with the contentious, competitive values that Victorian domestic ideology ostensibly relegates to the public sphere" (8).

order to do so. *Wonderland* thus presents Alice as an active participant in the ideology of femininity it constructs, molding herself to fit into the home.

*Through the Looking-Glass* takes up and extends this vision of Alice as actively participating in or fitting herself for womanly domesticity. Alice's *Looking-Glass* progress begins and ends in the home, first the "Looking-glass House" (*LG* 1.110) and finally the house of her banquet, which fronts "an arched doorway, over which were the words 'QUEEN ALICE'" (*LG* 12.198). In between these houses, Alice travels by railway, through woods, by boat, and in gardens. Yet her journey is united by her consistently maternal, domestic behavior. Throughout the book, Alice shows herself solicitous in caring for others' well-being, as when she worries that the Red King will "catch cold with lying on the damp grass" (*LG* 4.144), dresses up the Tweedle brothers while trying "to make them a *little* ashamed of fighting for such a trifle" (*LG* 4.148), or "hand[s] round the plum-cake" for the Lion, Unicorn, and White King (*LG* 7.176). Her lullaby to the Red and White Queens, as well as her tactful politeness to Humpty Dumpty and the White Knight, similarly cast Alice as a woman-in-training, for they script her role as one of mother (or governess) and wife, looking after dependents as well as male egos.

Alice's own desires give perhaps the clearest indication of her embrace of the feminine ideal. She shyly admits to the Red Queen that she wants more than to enter the game: she "should *like* to be a Queen, best," with all its connotations of motherhood and domestic rule (*LG* 2.126).[136] In the Sheep's shop, Alice wants to buy "a large bright thing

[136] Knoepflmacher defines queenship as a surrogate for adult femininity, arguing that Alice's "crowning comes to signify adult powers she has already tried to adopt in her handling of the childish black kitten" (511). He further defines the Eighth Square as the space "in which she expects to come into possession of

that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a work-box" (*LG* 5.154-155). In its appearance as a doll, this shape-shifting item symbolizes Alice's future role as mother, while its appearance as a work-box suggests the accomplished leisure of an upper-middle-class wife. Alice's desire for queenship and for physical tokens of womanhood in *Through the Looking-Glass* indicate her internalization of the ideology of queenly (recalling Ruskin's terminology) femininity. Together, the consistently domestic spaces of *Wonderland* and Alice's consistently domestic behavior in *Through the Looking-Glass* reveal her acquiescence to the books' ideal of femininity. Because Wonderland and Looking-Glass land are but constructions of Alice's mind, their domesticity and association with maternal, familial service define Alice's understanding of herself as contained within the context of her femininity.

Curiously, her dream-adventures further contain Alice within the home by casting her as a domestic servant. Her efforts to "a-dress" the White Queen (another instance of her *Looking-Glass* solicitude for others' well-being), putting the Queen's "shawl straight" and doing "her best to get the [Queen's] hair in order," end with the Queen offering her the job of "lady's maid" (*LG* 5.149). "I'm sure I'll take *you* with pleasure," she tells Alice, setting her salary at [t]wo pence a week" (*LG* 5.149). In *Wonderland*, the White Rabbit hires Alice without any salary negotiations, for Alice is "so much frightened" by his command that she run "home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan"

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the powers associated with mature womanhood" (512). Similarly, Geer claims, "Alice's desire to play Looking-Glass chess signifies her desire to grow up and gain an adult woman's powers" (14). Also, consider the accent on the Red and White Queens as both wives and mothers and the resonance between *Through the Looking-Glass*'s conception of queenship as womanhood and Ruskin's "Of Queen's Gardens," which similarly defines queenship as ideal femininity.

that she can do nothing but carry it out (*W* 4.27). In both cases, Alice's tenure as a domestic servant is short-lived. Her appropriation of the White Rabbit's house overturns her role as housemaid and presents Alice the domestic servant as just as absurd as giant Alice who fills a house. In *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice cannot "help laughing" at the White Queen's offer, assuring her that "I don't want you to hire *me*" (*LG* 5.150). Alice's laughter again reduces the idea of Alice-as-maid to an absurdity, one that can be laughed away, like her misadventure at the White Rabbit's house. However, these paired visions of Alice as a domestic servant preview her essential role as wife and mother, responsible for the management of the home as well as for the supervision of her own lady's maids and housemaids.

Through their consistent situation of Alice within a domestic realm, the *Alice* books establish their protagonist as subject to the ideal of femininity they espouse. Moreover, Alice's internalization of the feminine ideal manifests itself in her habit of self-scolding.[137] Fond as she is "of pretending to be two people," and, given the often punitive tenor of these disassociations (such as her attempt "to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing with herself"), Alice's self-scoldings seem a natural extension of her singular character (*W* 1.12). In fact, the *Looking-Glass* narrative gleefully notes that "she was always rather fond of scolding herself" (*LG* 9.192). More importantly, her habit of "pretending to be two people" easily slips into a student-teacher dynamic, demonstrating Alice's understanding of herself as

[137] Alice's scoldings, though less frequent and incisive, operate on the same principles as those of *Bleak House*'s Esther Summerson. I analyze Esther's self-scolding in detail in chapter three.

needing to be educated, and it is catalyzed by concerns with conduct. Thus, Alice's self-scolding represents an attempt to school herself in the femininity she must eventually internalize in order to successfully grow up. For example, once she becomes a queen in the Eighth Square of *Through the Looking-Glass*, her first impulse is to censure herself for un-queenly behavior: "[Y]our Majesty . . . it'll never do for you to be lolling about on the grass like that! Queens have to be dignified, you know!" (*LG* 9.192). Alice's quickness in turning from abandoned enjoyment ("lolling about") to admonishment ("it'll never do") and instruction ("Queens have to be dignified") illustrates how such scolding enables her to monitor and instruct herself in ideal feminine behavior.

Similarly, in *Wonderland*, Alice's self-scoldings work to mold girl-Alice to her ideal adult character. Early in her dream-adventures, Alice scolds herself for crying. Again, the scolding takes the form of censure followed by instruction: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself . . . a great girl like you . . . to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!" (*W* 2.14). In this instance, Alice reveals the premise on which she scolds herself is her ideal of adult behavior. Though the narrative defines her concern with being "great" as one of size, I assert that Alice uses "great" to signify her sense of herself as already somewhat grown up. She instructs herself to stop crying because she feels that her tears are antithetical to the adult character she wishes to embody. By revealing her internalization of an ideal of womanly behavior as well as her mechanism for inculcating it, Alice's self-scoldings in *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* underscore her imbrication in the books' ideology of femininity. More than subject to an ideal of womanhood, Alice actively learns and schools herself in it.

The association between lessons and womanly maturity present in all of Alice's self-scoldings casts growing up into ideal femininity as a matter of learning as well as of physical change. The examination to which the Red and White Queens subject Alice upon her arrival in the Eighth Square also posits education as generating womanhood: "You can't be a Queen, you know, until you've passed the proper examination," the Red Queen proclaims (*LG* 9.192).[138] Critical interpretations of this examination emphasize its criticism of learning, whether it be all education, as in Gillian Avery's reading of the exam's "rushing through school-room subjects and turning them all upside-down" as making all lessons "seem equally nonsensical" (326), or only female education, as in Joanna Tapp Pierce's argument that the exam indicates that "anyone who follows the rules can become queen . . . no matter what her education" (752). However, I want to draw attention to how, in addition to making a test of learning a condition of queenship, this examination defines female education as training for womanhood by prioritizing feminine knowledge and skills. After quizzing Alice on "sums" and the "ABC," the queens turn the examination to "useful questions," beginning with "How is bread made?" (*LG* 9.194). Such a question defines household knowledge as just as essential as reading, writing and summing for the queenly woman, evoking the books' definition of femininity as centered on domestic, familial concerns. The Queens' next questions, "Do you know

[138] In narrating an examination given by queens to make or mark prospective queens, Alice's test points to--and parodies--the increasing use of examinations in women's secondary education by 1871. At the time of *Through the Looking-Glass*'s publication, female students had been officially sitting the Cambridge and Oxford Local examinations for three years and the Cambridge Women's Higher Local examination had been instituted a year earlier. Though by this time Queen's College was beginning its transition into a secondary school, the idea of a "Queen's examination" would likely call up visions of young ladies sitting an academic test in the minds of Victorian readers. For a more detailed discussion of the advent of examinations in female education, see chapter one.

Languages? What's the French for fiddle-dee-dee?" also associate queenly femininity with ladylike accomplishments, as foreign languages remained an essential feature of middle- or upper-class girls' schooling through the end of the mid-Victorian period (*LG* 9.195). With the addition of the Red Queen's command that Alice "sing . . . a soothing lullaby," which serves as a sort of practicum-addendum to the formal questioning, the Queens' examination defines the ladylike, maternal, and domestic as the fields of knowledge in which woman must be proficient in order to achieve femininity (*LG* 9.196). Through the examination's suggestion that such feminine attributes can be taught and that a test of learning makes and marks womanhood, the *Alice* books identify proper, conventional womanhood as the goal of female education.

The forgoing readings have established that *Through the Looking-Glass* and *Wonderland* share an ideal of femininity grounded in the ladylike, maternal, and domestic concerns that dominate Alice's queenship examination. Just as Alice brings the ideology of femininity into Wonderland and Looking-Glass land, so too does she bring her education. In fact, the two come together, as Alice's self-scoldings illustrate.

## "I KNOW ALL SORTS OF THINGS": ALICE'S LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL AMBITION

Alice's self-scoldings testify to the importance of education to her and her adventures, and this internalization of a pedagogical dynamic is matched by numerous references to her learning. This section takes up the identification with learning evinced in Alice's habit of self-scolding to explore the books' presentation of Alice's education and its impact on her self-understanding. Through readings of her recitations, boasts, and anxieties of her learning, I argue that *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*

present Alice's education as generating an educational ambition that contains the potential to disrupt her feminine development.

Alice's references to her education create a picture of upper-middle-class female education surprisingly aligned with mid-century reality. Alice's (somewhat) realistic education serves, in part, to align her with the reality of the frame narratives, thereby reinforcing her relatability for readers as well as her association with the frames' ideal of womanhood. Like many upper-middle-class girls of her age, Alice's education is split between home and school. In terms of home learning, Alice most frequently references her "nurse," whose position likely encompasses both general supervision and elementary instruction (*W* 4.27, *LG* 1.110). In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice also references "the governess" (*LG* 3.135). This reference to a governess begins as a conjectural example, but Alice's confidence that "the governess would never think of excusing me lessons for that" implies that she is thinking of an actual governess, not merely speculating (*LG* 3.135). At seven-and-a-half years old, Alice's having both a nurse and governess is not beyond the realm of possibility, for she is at an age when many upper-middle-class girls would enter the family's schoolroom or begin attending a day or boarding school.

Alice's conversation with the Mock Turtle and Gryphon reveals that she has attended school as well.[139] "*I've* been to a day-school, too," she tells the Mock Turtle, "You needn't be so proud as all that" (*W* 9.76). Alice's further conversation with the

[139] I am not particularly interested in reading the books' account of Alice's education as strictly true. *Wonderland*'s revelation that she has "been to a day-school" is not undermined by the presence of a governess in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Instead, my discussion of Alice's education focuses on the books' representation (and assessment) of contemporary practices. By giving Alice both a home and a school education, the books fashion her as a sort of "everygirl" of mid-Victorian female education.

Mock Turtle highlights the conventional bent of her formal education, for when he inquires whether Alice's day-schooling included "extras," she quickly answers, "Yes . . . we learned French and music" (*W* 9.76). Her reply indicates that Alice's formal education includes properly feminine knowledge, whether at day-school or in the home schoolroom, for music was one of the accomplishments most frequently carried over into the more academically rigorous girls schools of the later mid-Victorian decades, and French was the subject most associated with female education for the whole of the nineteenth century. For example, the Taunton Commission's report on French finds that "girls have the better natural aptitude for it," and characterizes it as "on the whole a very successful school subject" for young women (Beale *Reports* 5).

In addition to French and music, Alice displays a variety knowledge during her dream-adventures, creating a picture of a broad, but superficial education--another way in which it approximates contemporary pedagogical realities. *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* indicate that Alice has also learned geography, mathematics, history, and science. Yet both books depict Alice's learning as consisting mainly of unconnected facts--much like the majority of textbooks in girls' schools at mid-century--without an understanding of their significance. To take her French as an example, after (mistakenly) surmising that the Mouse she meets in the Pool of Tears is French, Alice attempts to engage him in conversation. Her earlier attempt in English, "O Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool?" is original and applicable, but when she determines to try French, she can say no more than "Où est ma chatte?" which is "the first sentence of her French lesson-book" (*W* 2.18). Her inability to construct an original sentence--or to even recall

information beyond "the first sentence of her . . . lesson-book"--confirms the superficiality of Alice's education. Like Maggie Tulliver's education, Alice's keeps her from "go[ing] far into anything" (Eliot *Mill* 2.1.186).

Her difficulty in getting scientific facts straight similarly indicates the preponderance of rote learning in Alice's education. For example, discussing the earth's rotation Alice begins confidently enough, "the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis," but then hesitates, "twenty-four hours I think; or is it twelve?" (*W* 6.48). When she attempts to explain lightning, she encounters the same problem. "The cause of lightning," Alice says "very decidedly, for she felt quite certain" about her answer, "is the thunder--no, no!" she hastily corrects herself, "I meant the other way" (*LG* 9.195). Alice's inability to confidently pronounce the answer to these scientific questions, like her recourse to the "first sentence" of her French textbook, characterizes her education as based on rote learning. The Mock Turtle's frustration, "What *is* the use of repeating all that stuff . . . if you don't explain it as you go on?" perfectly captures the books' identification of such learning as superficial (*W* 10.84).[140]

*Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* further indicate the emphasis on memorization in Alice's formal education through her reactions to the recitations she performs during her dream-adventures. Though Alice grumbles at her third *Wonderland* recitation, "How the creatures order one about, and make one repeat lessons!" she

[140] The *Alice* books are skeptical of not only female learning, but of much contemporary pedagogical practice and didactic literature for children. Leach, for example, stresses "the strong reaction *against* didacticism which so many of the episodes illustrate," articulating a fruitful, well-entrenched vein of Carroll criticism (91). Lyon Clark similarly claims that though "Carroll may not be criticizing the content" of morally didactic verses and tales, "he does criticize the literary purpose of didactic verse, the way in which it tried to control children" (131).

nevertheless always obeys (*W* 10.82). Alice's acceptance of these "orders" to "repeat lessons" suggests that she encounters such commands on a regular basis and accepts them as part of the educational process. Her immediate assumption of a particular stance (she "fold[s] . . . her hands") further indicates that she has done so much recitation that the act and even the posture have become second nature (*W* 5.36). Alice's recitations continue in Looking-Glass land, where even the timid, melancholy Gnat prompts Alice to recite in the manner of a seasoned instructor: "Go on with your list of insects: you're wasting time" (*LG* 3.132). Alice's "counting off the names on her fingers" as she makes the list characterizes this exchange as a recitation (*LG* 3.133). Furthermore, it echoes her other recitation posture, hands folded demurely together in its habitual--almost instinctive--nature.

Alice's physical habits and reactions to the educational demands of her dream-adventure characterize much of her learning as the product of the sort of memorization-heavy pedagogy common in both day-school and home education for girls through the mid-Victorian decades. Yet Alice is nothing if not precocious, leading her to search for knowledge outside of the school-room. That she is a voracious reader is evident from her many remarks on what she has read, not only the "nice little stories" (*W* 1.10) with gruesome morals that caution Alice to check to see if the bottle is marked "poison," but also the "fairy tales" she "used to read" (*W* 4.29), and the nursery rhymes she references in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Indeed, she has read so much that she cannot keep track of it all, as evinced in her excuse of the Cheshire Cat: "A cat may look at a king . . . . I've read that in some book, but I don't remember where" (*W* 8.68).

Moreover, as her defense of the Cheshire Cat's gaze demonstrates, Alice frequently references her reading as a source of information. Her pleasure in the *Wonderland* courtroom exhibits her eagerness to learn from books, as well as that mode of learning's effectiveness, for though "Alice had never been in a court of justice before, . . . she had read about them in books, and she was quite pleased to find that she knew the name of nearly everything there" (*W* 11.86). However, this feat still reflects the superficiality of her knowledge--knowing the name of something is not the same as understanding its function or meaning. Regardless of the value of this particular knowledge, Alice's extracurricular reading, along with the fact that she is "rather proud of it" signals not just precocity, but a desire for learning that transcends her willingness to recite for creatures or governesses (*W* 11.86).

What she has "read about . . . in books" influences Alice's sense of the *Wonderland* courtroom by making her comfortable in an unfamiliar space. More importantly, it influences Alice's sense of herself, generating feelings of pleasure and pride: she is "quite pleased" with her ability to name "nearly everything there" and "rather proud" of the extent of her knowledge (*W* 11.86). This example of knowledge's ability to impact Alice's conception of herself--both in relation to spaces and in terms of her identity--establishes the centrality of learning to her self-perception.

Her entrances into Wonderland and Looking-Glass land exemplify Alice's identification of herself with learning. In both cases, she transforms an unfamiliar space into a school-room. Falling down the rabbit-hole, Alice looks about her to find "sides of the well . . . filled with cupboards and bookshelves" as well as "maps and pictures hung

up on pegs" (*W* 1.8). Walls lined with bookshelves, maps, and pictures conjure up not a hole or a well, but a school-room, where students are taught from books and where maps and pictures aid the explanation of historical and geographical concepts.[141] Significantly, Alice casts the rabbit-hole as a school-room not only by her apprehension of its "bookshelves" and "maps and pictures" but also by her response to it. She hardly seems upset at the prospect of falling through "a very deep well," reacting not with fear or discomfort but by recalling and applying information from her lessons (*W* 1.8). She speculates, "I must be getting somewhere near the center of the earth. Let me see, that would be four thousand miles down, I think" (*W* 1.8). Alice readily views this foreign, threatening space as a familiar one because of its likeness to the school-room.

Similarly, she acclimates to *Through the Looking-Glass*'s "most curious land" by treating it as a practical lesson (*LG* 1.125). She determines that "the first thing to do" is to "make a grand survey of the land she . . . [is] going to travel through," a task that seems very much like a lesson (*LG* 3.129). "It's something very like learning geography," she notes, getting as far as "Principle [sic] rivers--there *are* none. Principle mountains--I'm on the only one, but I don't think it's got any name. Principle towns--" before breaking off to squint at the bee-elephants in the distance (*LG* 3.129). Alice's survey of Looking-Glass land places her in the school-room not only through her sense that it is "something

[141] In fact, *Wonderland* itself employs pictures to aid learning, twice pointing the reader to an illustration in order to instruct or clarify. Upon Alice's first encounter with the Gryphon, a narrative aside instructs the reader, "[I]f you don't know what a gryphon is, look at the picture," indicating that the image will define the half-lion, half-eagle creature (*W* 9.73). The narrative again directs the reader to an illustration for better comprehension in the courtroom: "[T]he judge, by the way, was the King; and . . . he wore his crown over the wig (look at the frontispiece if you want to see how he did it)" (*W* 11.86). These instructional asides reinforce the educational valence of "maps and pictures," thereby reinforcing the characterization of the rabbit-hole as school-room.

very like learning geography" but also through the formulaic nature of her survey. Her progress through the pertinent features--rivers, mountains, and towns--suggests that she is reciting a memorized formula or series of questions instead of constructing an original, spontaneous map of the landscape. This reliance on memorized structures tames the (admittedly already hyper-ordered) unfamiliar landscape. In the cases of both her *Looking-Glass* survey and her *Wonderland* fall, Alice acclimates to a fantastic world by recasting it as an environment in which she easily imagines herself: a place for lessons. Her ability to place herself in the school-room defines learning as the means by which Alice orients herself. Learning is also the means by which she perceives herself, as her anxiety over identity in *Wonderland* confirms.

Though her transformation of the rabbit-hole into a school-room smoothes Alice's transition from reality to Wonderland, her equanimity is soon challenged by her changes in size. Concerned that she has "changed in the night," Alice concludes that "if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?'" (*W* 2.15). Alice, being Alice, turns to concrete facts in order to answer this "great puzzle": she begins "thinking over all the children she knew . . . to see if she could have been changed for any of them" (*W* 2.15). This process of elimination offers a telling example of her self-identification with learning: "I'm sure I'm not Ada . . . for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all; and I'm sure I ca'n't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little!" (*W* 2.15). Most obviously, Alice's ruling out of Mabel as her new identity defines "Alice" as clever or learned, as one who, first and foremost, "know[s] all sorts of things." Yet Alice's comparison of herself to Ada also

bears significantly on her identification as clever, for it defines cleverness (the capacity for learning or knowledge) as an innate quality. Alice's comparisons define intellect as essential and unalterable--like hair. Just as one's hair naturally "goes in . . . ringlets" or it naturally "doesn't," one is either naturally clever or naturally isn't (*W* 2.15). This concept of cleverness as akin to hair demonstrates the centrality of intellect to Alice's understanding of herself. Ada's ringlets make her Ada, and Alice's learning makes her Alice.

Somewhat reassured that "*she's* she and *I'm* I," Alice attempts to confirm her identity by "try[ing] if I know all the things I used to know" (*W* 2.15). When she fails her tests of "the Multiplication-Table" and "Geography," Alice draws the obvious conclusion, that her recitations are "all wrong, I'm certain! I must have been changed for Mabel!" (*W* 2.16). Yet this prospect is so distasteful to Alice that she tries again, determining, "I'll try and say '*How doth the little*--'" (*W* 2.16). Her second failure brings Alice to tears, for she has no choice but to conclude that "I must be Mabel after all, and I shall have to live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and oh, ever so many lessons to learn!" (*W* 2.16). Her stress on having "so many lessons to learn" as the last term in the series of miseries of being Mabel emphasizes Alice's valuation of learning by defining a lack of knowledge as the greatest poverty.

Alice's later recitation in *Wonderland* reaffirms her sense that because she does not "know all the things I used to know," she is changed. Her reply to the Caterpillar's inquiry, "So you think you're changed, do you?" hinges on not being able to remember her lessons (*W* 5.36). "I'm afraid I am, Sir," she replies, explaining, "I ca'n't remember

things as I used" (*W* 5.36). Alice's answer to the Caterpillar's call for clarification, "Ca'n't remember *what* things?" that "I've tried to say '*How doth the little busy bee*,' but it all came different!" reveals that she bases her memory, and so her identity, on what she has learned (*W* 5.36). Again, Alice is only Alice when she "know[s] all sorts of things" from her lessons (*W* 2.15).

Alice's recitations thus assert her identity as much as they assert her knowledge. Given her self-definition as learned, it amounts to much the same thing. The public nature of Alice's recitations, with their supposition of a listening, evaluating audience, encapsulate her concept of learning throughout her dream-adventures. Her constant efforts to "show . . . off her knowledge" become a means of proving that she is clever and thus that she is Alice (*W* 1.8). This desire to prove her self-image accounts for the close association between knowledge and appearance in Alice's deployments of her learning. The narrator's gloss on Alice's geographical soliloquy during her fall into Wonderland epitomizes the relationship between knowing and demonstrating knowledge inherent in her need to show off: "Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was not a *very* good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over" (*W* 1.8).[142] Her determination to continue showing off as "good practice" bespeaks not only Alice's association of learning with an audience--lessons require an instructor "to

[142] I argue that the narrator's comment becomes free indirect discourse at the end of the first independent clause, making it Alice's judgment that "though this was not a very good opportunity . . . still it was good practice to say it over" (*W* 1.8). For discussion of the interchange between narrator and Alice, especially in *Wonderland*, see Gubar and Knoepflmacher.

listen to her"--but also her positive view of such performance. To Alice, "showing off" amounts to "good practice," that is, a beneficial behavior, because it explicitly identifies her with learning. Her feeling "very glad to get an opportunity of showing off a little of her knowledge" in conversation with the Duchess (especially after that lady's pronouncement, "You don't know very much") is perhaps Alice's most acute feeling in *Wonderland* (*W* 6.48).

Certainly it is a common feeling, for Alice takes the "opportunity of showing off . . . her knowledge" wherever she can find it, even if only to herself. For example, in the *Wonderland* courtroom, Alice is "quite pleased to find that she knew the name of nearly everything there," including the jurors (*W* 11.86). Her repetition of the word jurors "two or three times over to herself, being rather proud of it" because she thinks "that very few little girls of her age knew the meaning of it at all" epitomizes Alice's eagerness to flaunt her knowledge regardless of her audience (*W* 11.86). Moreover, in its comparison of Alice to other "little girls of her age," this instance of showing off recalls her earlier attempt to ascertain her identity based on what she knows.

Alice's compulsion to show off, "her eagerness to know and to be right," as Auerbach puts it, emphasizes the centrality of learning to her self-image (33). Her self-association with knowing and being right also comes to inflect her perception of the world around her, as illustrated by her transformation of *Wonderland*'s rabbit-hole into a school-room and her survey of Looking-Glass land into a geography lesson. She associates herself with learning, so she casts unfamiliar spaces as spaces of education in order to understand them. Alice's emphasis on learning in conversation analogously

bespeaks her eagerness to construct herself as clever. For example, "not quite sure whether it . . . [is] good manners for her to speak first" to the Duchess, Alice begins by asking her "why your cat grins like that" (*W* 6.47). She learns that the cat in question is a "Cheshire-Cat," that all cats can grin, "and [that] most of 'em do" (*W* 6.48). Alice's reply, "I don't know of any that do," belies her feeling "quite pleased to have got into a conversation" (*W* 6.48). Alice's conversational strategy both gets her "into a conversation" and gets her more knowledge, reinforcing her self-association with learning by casting her as curious, that is, "desirous of seeing or knowing," and clever enough to ask learned questions ("Curious").

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, this conversational strategy further underscores Alice's self-identity as clever, for she uses it in order to sidestep criticism, especially criticism of her ignorance. In conversation with Humpty Dumpty, she deflects his criticism of her name ("It's a stupid name enough!") by asking, "Why do you sit out here all alone?" (*LG* 7.160). Later, when their conversation begins to flag, Alice revives it with a compliment and a question, "You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir . . . . Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called 'Jabberwocky'?" (*LG* 7.164). Her query revives the dialogue as well as garners her an explication the first stanza of the poem and an explanation of portmanteau words. As these exchanges suggest, Alice sees opportunities for aligning herself with learning--in this case, by presenting herself as interested in more knowledge--throughout her dream-adventures.

Alice's conversations with the denizens of Wonderland and Looking-Glass land reinforce her self-identification with learning not only by showing her to be interested in

new knowledge, but also by enabling her to show off knowledge she already possesses. Her interjection into the Mock Turtle's history to inquire why the students called their turtle schoolmaster "Tortoise, if he wasn't one," neatly combines both of these elements of her conversation (*W* 9.75). Though cast as a genuine, information-gathering question, Alice's query actually asserts her knowledge of the difference between turtles and tortoises, even if the Mock Turtle's answer invalidates it. Alice's imagined conversation with an inhabitant of "the antipathies" in *Wonderland* similarly illustrates Alice's association of conversation with a means of showing off learning. "I shall have to ask them what the name of the land is," she imagines, and then, in an echo of her earlier recitations, she practices the conversation, "Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand? Or Australia?" (*W* 1.8-9). However, Alice dislikes the idea of presenting herself as genuinely in need of knowledge and so aborts this imagined dialogue: "And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere" (*W* 1.9). Nowhere is Alice's desire to be perceived as learned more transparent than this refusal to engage in (imaginary) conversation because she will be thought "an ignorant little girl."

In her dialogue with the Duchess during the Queen of Hearts's croquet game, Alice again uses conversation to show off her learning. She contradicts the older lady's pronouncement that "flamingoes and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is--'Birds of a feather flock together'" by remarking "Only mustard isn't a bird" (*W* 9.71). Not content merely to point out the Duchess's mistake, Alice sets about determining what mustard is. "It's a mineral, I *think*" (*W* 9.71), she begins, before remembering the correct

answer: “Oh, I know! . . . It’s a vegetable. It doesn’t look like one, but it is” (*W* 9.72). Similarly, she is “surprised into contradicting” the Red Queen on the basis of her learning (*LG* 2.125). In response to the Red Queen’s assertion of superlative knowledge, “When you say ‘hill’ . . . *I* could show you a hill, in comparison with which you’d call that a valley,” Alice cannot help but assert her own knowledge of geography: “No I shouldn’t . . . a hill *ca’n’t* be a valley” (*LG* 2.125). Her contradictions of the Duchess’s classification of mustard, the Red Queen’s evaluation of a hill, and oblique quarrel with the Mock Turtle’s designation of his tutor reveal that the desire to show off learning that drives Alice’s conversations easily shades into argumentativeness. *Through the Looking-Glass* further associates Alice’s self-understanding as clever with argumentativeness at the start of the Queens’ exam, when she again contradicts the Red Queen. The narrative interrupts Alice’s petulant complaint against the command to “Speak when you’re spoken to” to note that she is “always ready for a little argument” (*LG* 9.193). The connection between showing off and argumentativeness made in this instance, compounded by Alice’s boldness in contradicting a queen, reveals the result of Alice’s acquisitive, boastful relationship to learning: ambition.

Her conversations with others--as well as with herself--in Wonderland and Looking-Glass land underscore the fact that Alice’s self-concept is not just “clever” but “cleverer than.” Her identity as Alice depends on exactly this ambitious sense of self, for she is “sure I ca’n’t be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little!” (*W* 2.15). Moreover, the argumentative and acquisitive valence of Alice’s conversations with others as well as with herself define Alice’s identification with

learning as inherently ambitious. Alice is not content to merely show off what she already knows but is always ambitious for more learning. She desires more knowledge than she already has and, as her self-comparison with Mabel exemplifies, more knowledge than others. Through their presentation of Alice's identification with learning, *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* define her ambition as the product of her engagement with her education. Alice's ambition is inherently an educational ambition.

The ambition that leads Alice to view the exchange of information as a good means of beginning or keeping up conversation further manifests itself in her pleasure in learning, whether gaining facts or deducing rules. In fact, both books identify pleasure as her primary emotion upon gaining knowledge. In addition to being "quite pleased to find that she knew the names of nearly everything" in the *Wonderland* court of justice (*W* 11.86), she is "very much pleased at having found out a new kind of rule" for influencing temper through food (*W* 9.70) and is "quite pleased to know" the "very good reason" for the *Looking-Glass* flowers' conversational ability (*LG* 2.122). Furthermore, Alice's educational ambition manifests in her eagerness to apply, and so prove that she has mastered, what she learns. Her exegesis of "Jabberwocky" with Humpty Dumpty exemplifies this desire for mastery. She learns that many of the poem's "hard words" are "like a portmanteau--there are two meanings packed up into one word" (*LG* 6.164) and is able to quickly apply this knowledge to the poem, reasoning that "'*the wabe*' is the grass-plot round a sun-dial" (*LG* 6.165). Her enthusiasm for this particular lesson even leads her to interrupt Humpty Dumpty's affirmation of her correct deduction: "'Of course it is. It's called '*wabe*', you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind

it--' 'And a long way beyond it on each side,' Alice add[s]" (*LG* 6.165). This interruption, which echoes the competitive quality of Alice's earlier conversation with Humpty Dumpty, casts her application of learning as another means of showing off. Alice is not content merely to understand, but must also prove to an audience (and, for this, Humpty Dumpty is ideal) that she understands.

Moreover, her demonstration of her understanding and mastery of "Jabberwocky" speaks to Alice's ambition to gain learning outside of the school-room. Her extra-curricular learning, in turn, is itself ambitious, extending beyond what most "little girls of her age know" (*W* 11.86). Significantly, *Wonderland* suggests that Alice's ambition works to cross not only the boundary of what "girls of her age" should learn, but also of what girls of any age should learn. Her ambition most obviously crosses conventional gender boundaries in her pretensions to classical learning, as her address to the Mouse in the pool of tears, "O Mouse!" reveals (*W* 2.18). She thinks that "this must be the right way of speaking to a mouse" though she has "never done such a thing before" because she recalls "having seen, in her brother's Latin Grammar, 'A mouse--of a mouse--to a mouse--a mouse--o mouse!'" (*W* 2.18). Though the narrative qualifies Alice's show of classical knowledge by maintaining that she has only "seen" this exercise, her recall here equals, if not exceeds, her ability to remember her own lessons (she can only remember "the first sentence in her French lesson-book" a sentence later) and so attests to her ambition for more advanced, exclusive education (*W* 2.18).

*Wonderland* casts this exclusivity in terms of gender. By presenting Alice's exposure to Latin as the product of her having a brother, *Wonderland* classifies it as a

subject for male learning only. (One doubts that the book Alice's sister is reading in the opening frame is a Latin Grammar or Greek Testament, its lack of pictures or conversations notwithstanding.) *Wonderland* reinforces the presentation of classical learning as a male preserve by gendering as male its only other student of classics. The Gryphon, who in *Wonderland* takes the possessive adjective "his" and so may be considered male, describes his education under "the Classical master" (also a "he") who "taught Laughing and Grief" (*W* 9.77).[143] By marking Latin and Greek as masculine areas of knowledge, *Wonderland* reflects contemporary perceptions of gendered education. More importantly, Alice's desire to learn Latin positions her educational ambition as an ambition to enter this male preserve. Alice's educational ambition thus contains the potential to align Alice with the male learning, threatening her development of proper femininity.

### "[W]RONG FROM BEGINNING TO END": DEFUSING THE THREAT OF FEMALE EDUCATIONAL AMBITION

This section focuses on the *Alice* books' presentation of the threat to Alice's feminine development posed by her learning and educational ambition through readings of how Alice's ambition generates unfeminine behaviors and how the narrative and other characters work to defuse that threat. I argue that the books challenge and depreciate Alice's learning in order to discourage readerly identification with a dangerous educational ambition. Alice's interest in her brother's Latin book, which, *Wonderland* suggests, comes at the expense of her own ladylike learning of French, establishes how

[143] "'So he did, so he did,' said the Gryphon, sighing in his turn" (*W* 9.77).

her educational ambition draws her interest and attention away from properly feminine learning. In addition to the power of learning to distract Alice from her appropriate studies, the *Alice* books indicate that her educational ambition leads to unladylike self-assertion. Her fondness for showing off and the argumentative tenor of her conversations exhibit how Alice's ambition leads to snobbery, self-aggrandizement, and bossiness.

This snobbery and self-assertion shade into a desire for command that aligns Alice with the "bad" women of her dream-adventures. For example, in the *Wonderland* courtroom, Alice assumes command of the proceedings more than once. She knocks over the jury-box, upsetting the jurors and disrupting the proceedings while drawing attention to herself, and she also challenges the King of Hearts's capacity to order her out of the court-room. Most importantly, she commands the courtroom by challenging the very trial itself, calling into question the verses entered as evidence. As the King attempts to explain this "most important piece of evidence," Alice interrupts him and positions herself as the authority: "If any one of them [the jurors] can explain it . . . I'll give him sixpence. *I* don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it" (*W* 12.95). Alice's emphasis on her interpretation, indicated by the italicized "I" of the second sentence, as well as her volunteering of a reward for the explication of the verses, effectively undercuts the King of Hearts's authority and makes Alice judge in his stead. In her domineering self-assertion (as well as in her removing the Lizard's head by putting him back in the jury-box "head downwards"), Alice comes to resemble the power-mad Queen of Hearts (*W* 12.93). Alice's resemblance to the Queen of Hearts, a female character distinctly at odds with the books' ideal of womanhood, registers the lack of femininity inherent in the self-

assertion generated by her educational ambition. By promoting unfeminine self-assertion as well as an interest in exclusively male knowledge, Alice's educational ambition characterizes learning as dangerously capable of disrupting girls' development of feminine womanhood.

The most concentrated meditation on learning in the books, Alice's interaction with the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon in *Wonderland*, centers on learning's capability to unsex female students. During the course of his "history," which is comprised solely of his schooling, the Mock Turtle enumerates the subjects taught in "the regular course," including "the different branches of Arithmetic--Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision" (*W* 9.76). Besides being clever parodies, the Mock Turtle's branches of basic mathematics closely correspond to the progress of unsexing thought to be undergone by overly-educated women by the end of the mid-Victorian period. The association of arithmetic with unsexing is particularly apt, not least because of the perception of mathematics as a male field of study.[144] The progress begins with "Ambition," which creates girls' desire to pursue advanced learning. My readings of Alice's desires to learn and to show off emphasize *Wonderland*'s and *Through the Looking-Glass*'s representation of her ambition's basis in learning as well as its association with unfeminine behavior and interests.

Exposing girls and women to subjects outside of those demarcated as properly feminine, educational ambition, in the Mock Turtle's arithmetic, leads to their

[144] For example, the majority of girls who failed the Cambridge Local examination in 1863 (when it first opened to female students) did so in arithmetic. The Taunton Commission's report notes that in the girls' schools it studied, "Mathematics do not appear to be much in use, or to be carried far" (Beale *Reports* 4).

"Distraction" from their proper learning and womanly roles. Contemporary concerns with secondary and higher education for women frequently employ this understanding of education as a distraction that will lead female students to disregard or disclaim their essential womanhood. For example, Cheltenham Ladies College's first report to shareholders in 1855 depicts the school as uniquely able to "develop the intellect without making female pedants," reflecting the anxiety that education will, by generating female students only concerned with their academic interests, "unfit . . . them for their domestic mission" (qtd. in Clarke 35). The Oxford and Cambridge Women's Higher Local examinations similarly reflect the contemporary concern with female educational ambition and distraction. The creators and supporters of these examinations praised the tests for shielding women from competition with men and expected that by providing female students with recognition but not certification, the exams would satisfy educational ambition without enabling women to act on their "distraction."

The final two branches of the Mock Turtle's arithmetic, "Uglification" and "Derision," correspond to the more severe effects of female education. The concept of "Uglification" calls up the mid-Victorian perception that learned women became physically stunted or unsexed as the result of applying the energy needed for full reproductive development and health to their studies.[145] Underdeveloped breasts and hips,

[145] This concern developed in the 1850s and gained momentum through the remainder of the century. See, for example, Maudsley's argument in "Sex in Mind and in Education" that "excessive educational strain," especially during puberty, will result in "baneful effects upon female health" (42). These "baneful effects" on the female body in turn do "injury to their [women's] functions as the conceivers, mothers, and nurses of children," and will, if left unchecked, yield "a puny, enfeebled, and sickly race" (39). See also Tilt's 1854 recommendation that "during the crisis of puberty, and until puberty is fully confirmed, there should be a general relaxation from study" because it "might . . . too forcibly engross the mind, and the energies

such as those diagnosed as the result of study by Herbert Spencer, as well as other physical deformities such as spinal curvature traced to learning by physicians like Edward Clarke, Henry Maudsley, and William Withers Moore are undoubtedly "uglifications" to a society that accented woman's role as child bearer and mother. "Derision," the last stage in the progress of the unsexed, learned woman, represents her final, fundamental alienation from "natural" feminine roles. Derided by men as unattractive and thus unmarriageable--and deriding marriage and motherhood as beneath her ambition and her intellect--the educated woman unsexes herself by abjuring definitive elements of femininity, marital and maternal relationships. Moreover, her derision of motherhood, like her inability to bear children because of the effects of "ugification" on her reproductive system, means the educated woman also disrupts the social order by unsexing the gender roles on which it based.

Taken as a whole, the Mock Turtle's arithmetic outlines a vision of female education that aligns learning with educational ambition and aligns both with disrupted, unsexed, and so damaged and dangerous, girls and women. In the light of the Mock Turtle's arithmetic, Alice's educational ambition becomes more than proud or argumentative self-assertion--it becomes the gateway to an education that will preclude her from achieving feminine womanhood. More than associating her with the "bad" women of her dream-adventures, Alice's educational ambition contains the potential to unsex her, associating her with no woman at all. Alice's ambition implies a distraction

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required by the constitution to work out Nature's ends," i.e. the full development and functioning of the reproductive system (209).

from learning and from her potential to embody the feminine womanhood that the narrative frames posit as her future. This potential to disrupt Alice's feminine development by making her into an ugly, "bad" woman or an unsexed, strong-minded creature constitutes the danger of educational ambition in the *Alice* books. Both books foreground the danger of such ambition in the urgency of their efforts to discredit it. By undermining Alice's claims to learning and by challenging female capacity for learning generally, *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* present female learning and educational ambition as absurd as well as dangerously antithetical to female development. In doing so, they reveal an anxiety about the impact of learning on the female body and mind.

Because she is the books' example of female educational ambition, Alice also serves as their example of such ambition's absurdity and its need to be checked. In order to check Alice's ambition (and, especially, to deflate it in the eyes of the reader) the narrative draws attention to her mistakes or misapprehensions, undermining the sense of learning that fuels her improper ambition. For example, in the *Wonderland* courtroom, the narrative emphasizes the superfluity of Alice's supposedly superior knowledge. The court of justice offers Alice ample "opportunity for showing off her knowledge" (*W* 1.8). It also highlights her ambitious desire to know more than others in its revelation of her pride at knowing the word "juror" because she thinks "that very few little girls of her age knew the meaning of it at all" (*W* 11.86). The narrative confirms Alice's belief, adding "and rightly too" to her suspicion that few girls know this word, before immediately undercutting it and, by extension, her pride in her learning by noting that "'jurymen'

would have done just as well" (*W* 11.86). Alice's knowledge of the word "jurors" proves unnecessary, since another, simpler word describes the creatures "just as well." By offering an equal but less esoteric alternative to "jurors," the narrative eliminates the grounds for Alice's pride.

The narrative more directly undermines Alice's ambition by drawing attention to her failures to understand or apply her lessons. For example, when Alice concludes that the Mouse "doesn't understand English," and so must be "a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror," the narrative interjects, "for, with all her knowledge of history, Alice had no very clear notion how long ago anything had happened" (*W* 2.18). Ostensibly an interpretation of Alice's reasoning, the narrative aside effectively undermines "all her knowledge" instead. This strategy also operates during Alice's recitation in the rabbit-hole. Alice's attempt to discover "what Latitude or Longitude I've got to" becomes merely another instance of "showing off," for the narrative asserts that "Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought that they were nice grand words to say" (*W* 1.8).

Additionally, during Alice's recitation in the rabbit-hole, the narrative interjects its qualifications of her learning at the moment of her uncertainty. For example, when Alice considers the distance to "the center of the earth," the narrative enters in the pause between "I think," her admission of doubt, and "yes, that's about the right distance," her self-confirmation to explain that "Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room" (*W* 1.8). Again, the narrative splits Alice's thoughts at the point of her uncertainty about the "antipathies": "'[H]ow funny it will seem to come out among

the people who walk with their heads downwards! The antipathies, I think--' (she was rather glad there was no one listening, this time, as it didn't seem at all the right word)--'but I shall have to ask them what the name of the land is'" (*W* 1.8). As the narrative's well-timed interjections highlight, Alice herself undermines her learning during the fall down the rabbit-hole. As she recites, Alice becomes increasingly less confident that her recitation is correct, signaled by the addition of "I think--" to her statements (*W* 1.8). Thrown further into doubt by the "antipathies," Alice appeals for help, asking an imaginary lady, "Please Ma'am, is this New Zealand, or Australia?" (*W* 1.8). Yet before she can act the part of the informed lady, Alice stops. She cannot provide the correct answer. Instead, she fixates on her lack: "[W]hat an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking!" (*W* 1.8) As this dialogue in the rabbit-hole demonstrates, Alice's anxiety about being perceived as "an ignorant little girl" exposes her educational ambition as well as its tenuousness.

Certainly, the tenuousness of Alice's self-identification as clever does not go unnoticed by the *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* creatures with whom she interacts. In fact, they often work to prove her ignorance, commanding her to recite and then critiquing the result. The Caterpillar, for example, bids her, "Repeat '*You are old, Father William*'" (*W* 5.36) and judges the product "wrong from beginning to end" (*W* 5.41). The Gryphon and Mock Turtle also command a recitation. "Stand up and repeat '*'Tis the voice of the sluggard*'," prompts the Gryphon, who diplomatically comments that Alice's "very queer" version is "different from what *I* used to say when I was a child" (*W* 10.82), while the Mock Turtle judges it "uncommon nonsense" (*W* 10.83). In addition to judging

Alice's ability to recall her lessons, the Mock Turtle and Gryphon underscore her inability to understand what she has ostensibly learned, complaining that she "ca'n't explain it" (*W* 10.82).

Humpty Dumpty similarly challenges Alice's learning by asking for proof. He "look[s] doubtful" at Alice's solution to his subtraction problem and commands, "I'd rather see that done on paper," showing no faith in her ability to work subtraction problems in her head (*LG* 6.163). Though in this case the paper proves her to be correct, Humpty Dumpty's desire to see the problem "done on paper" evinces a skepticism of Alice's learning shared by many of the creatures in her dream-adventures.[146] Indeed, Alice's companions in Wonderland and Looking-Glass land frequently echo the narrative's undermining of her education, typified by the comment "Alice thought over all she could remember about ravens and writing desks, which wasn't much" (*W* 7.55). For example, the Duchess tells Alice, "[Y]ou don't know much . . . and that's a fact" (*W* 6.48), the Mock Turtle pronounces her "very dull" (*W* 9.75), and the *Looking-Glass* Rose proclaims that "it's *my* opinion that you never think *at all*" (*LG* 2.122).

*Wonderland* and *Through The Looking-Glass* further challenge Alice's desire for learning by each furnishing a character who who schemes a way for Alice to get out of her lessons. In *Wonderland*, it is the Mad Hatter, enumerating of the benefits of being on good terms with Time. "He'd do almost anything you liked with the clock," the Hatter

[146] In addition to his skepticism about Alice's mathematical ability, Humpty Dumpty does not credit her with much skill in the way of reading, for he assumes that "Jabberwocky" has been recited to her. After explaining the poem he inquires, "[W]ho's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?" (*LG* 6.166). In doing so he reiterates the poem's difficulty and refuses the possibility that Alice could have read it herself. "I read it in a book," Alice replies, asserting not only her ability to read, but her ability to recall (if not understand) such "hard stuff" (*LG* 6.166).

explains, “For instance, suppose it were nine o’clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you’d only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!” (*W* 7.56). The Hatter’s “instance” here seems calculated, as if he deliberately chose the example of skipping lessons in order to appeal to his audience. Alice does “thoughtfully” agree that such an arrangement “would be grand, certainly” (*W* 7.56). Yet, as I have shown, Alice’s educational ambition drives her to more learning, not less. Consequently, the Hatter’s “instance” seems less a well-tuned example than a suggestion of what Alice’s desires should be. By demonstrating what could have been if Alice had “only kept on good terms” with Time, the Hatter articulates a vision of what Alice should be: happy to dispense with her education (*W* 7.56).

The *Looking-Glass* Gnat similarly takes Alice’s desertion of her lessons as an explanatory “instance” (*LG* 3.134). Speculating on the benefits of namelessness, the Gnat declares, “[H]ow convenient it would be if you could manage to go home without it! For instance, if the governess wanted to call you to your lessons, she would call out ‘Come here--,’ and there she would have to leave off, because there wouldn’t any name for her to call, and of course you wouldn’t have to go” (*LG* 3.134-135). Like the Hatter, the Gnat uses an example of the benefits of a certain situation to imply that Alice should want to miss her lessons. He calls the loss of her name “convenient” for this very reason. The Gnat’s and the Hatter’s employment of the same “for instance” structure links their separate proposals that Alice abandon her education, giving them notable weight. Together, the Gnat and the Hatter characterize Alice’s educational ambition as abnormal and challenge her desire for learning. In their shared assumption that Alice does--or

should--want to avoid her lessons, the Gnat's and the Hatter's projection of Alice's relationship to learning aligns with other creatures' evaluation of Alice's education to undercut her educational ambition.

A crucial example of the *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* creatures' evaluation of Alice's learning comes the *Looking-Glass* flowers. Following the daisies and the Rose, the Violet adds her disparagement of Alice's intellect to this floral chorus, pronouncing, "I never saw anybody that looked stupider" (*LG* 2.122). The Violet's comment unites the other flowers' judgments on Alice's intellect and their judgments on her appearance to identify a consonance between the girl's looks and her brains. The Rose's perception of Alice, "Her face has got *some* sense in it, though it's not a clever one," similarly posits the body as a legible indicator of the mind (*LG* 2.121). Significantly, both of these evaluations associate the female body with a lack of learning or mental power: the Rose reads Alice's body as "not . . . clever" and the Violet reads it as "stupid." In addition to undermining Alice's ambition by undercutting her pretensions to learning, these comments assert a female inability for intellectual work by defining the female body as incompatible with learning.

Such perceptions of physiological difference as necessitating a different, less academically rigorous curriculum for girls had, by the mid-1860s, become codified in the schedules of many girls' secondary schools, which kept shorter hours than boys' schools in deference to the anxiety that sustained study would sap girls' physical resources and retard their development. Moreover, the perception that the female body was essentially unsuited to advanced mental work, whether because it lacked the resources or because

study would co-opt energy needed for the reproductive system, served as a key grounds of objection against women's higher education from the late 1860s through the end of the century. The *Alice* books, attendant as they are to issues of education, especially female education, take up this definition of woman as physically incapable of sustained intellectual effort in order to articulate an anxiety about the effects of learning on the developing female body.

In addition to having her body reveal her true lack of learning, Alice encounters anxiety about the physical toll of mental work on the developing female body at a crucial moment of her educational progress, her *Looking-Glass* examination. Five subjects into the queens' nonsensical exam, the Red Queen "anxiously interrupt[s]" in order to "[f]an her [Alice's] head" because she must "be feverish after so much thinking" (*LG* 9.195). As if to prove the level of their concern through the power of their fanning, both queens "set to work and fan . . . her with bunches of leaves, till she ha[s] . . . to beg them to leave off" (*LG* 9.195). Though the queens immediately resume the examination once they determine that Alice is "all right again now," the alacrity and anxiety with which they stop and fan her conveys the extremity of the physiological dangers facing Alice (*LG* 9.195). The queens' fear of Alice becoming "feverish after so much thinking" confirms the incompatibility of femininity and intellectuality in its belief that a properly feminine, queenly body cannot handle the mental stress necessitated by such an exam.

By suggesting that too much mental activity can damage a girl's physiological balance, the *Alice* books articulate a belief in a fundamental female inability for intellectual work. If a girl cannot pursue higher education without jeopardizing her

health, she must lack a capacity for such study. Alice's size changes in *Wonderland* offer another, more oblique meditation on the physiological toll of mental work on the developing female body. Her rapid succession of changes in size indicate to Alice that she has "changed in the night" and precipitate the crisis of identity which ends in her attempt to prove that "*I'm* I" by ascertaining if "I know all the things I used to know" (*W* 2.15). Therefore, Alice's bodily change is intimately tied to her learning and her self-identification as learned. In addition to calling into question her individual identity, Alice's size changes destabilize her gender identity. She can only stutter out "'I--I'm a little girl' . . . rather doubtfully, as she remember[s] . . . the number of changes she had gone through, that day," when the Pigeon insists that she is a "serpent" (*W* 5.43).[147] Her uncertainty with regard to her status as a girl here reflects the potential for unsexing that follows from the physiological damage incurred through excess learning. By characterizing the female body, whether that of an adventuring girl or a newly-minted queen, as in danger of deformity or derangement as the result of "much thinking," the *Alice* books present the incompatibility of proper femininity and learning as a matter of physiological fact (*LG* 9.195).

Moreover, just as the books' anxiety about physiological damage via learning implies a gendered body, the White Queen's example reveals their conception of gender in mind. Possessed of ample maternal instincts, the White Queen conspicuously lacks academic ability: "I can do addition," she proudly declares, but only "if you give me

[147] The phallic quality of her "immense length of neck" in this scene reinforces the Alice's gender ambiguity in the midst of her changes (*W* 5.42).

time" (*LG* 9.194). Her admission, "I can't do subtraction under *any* circumstances!" may be kindly meant as consolation for Alice, who is, at this point, dismally failing the examination, but it nonetheless characterizes her Majesty as cheerfully brainless. This characterization is only heightened by her whispered confidence, "I'll tell you a secret--I can read words of one letter. Isn't *that* grand?" (*LG* 9.194). The Red Queen confirms the White Queen's incapacity for mental work via a particularly narratorial interjection into the latter's speech: "'It was *such* a thunder-storm, you ca'n't think!' ('She never could, you know,' said the Red Queen)" (*LG* 9.196). The White Queen's cheerful, kind ignorance perhaps exaggerates the incapacity of the female mind for advanced study, but it nonetheless posits an incompatibility between feminine womanhood and intellectual learning. A truly maternal, feminine woman has neither the physical or mental resources to spend on higher learning.

The Queens' examination further illustrates the *Alice* books' concept of female incompatibility with intellectuality through its definition of specific fields of knowledge as appropriate for queenship. As I argued above, the examination emphasizes a particular set of knowledge as certifying, if not creating, adult femininity. In addition to the elementary subjects that every girl (and boy) should learn, reading, writing, and basic arithmetic, the queens quiz Alice on "manners" (*LG* 9.193), modern languages, and "useful," domestic subjects (*LG* 9.194). An aborted line of questioning on scientific topics and the culmination of the exam in Alice being required to "sing . . . a soothing lullaby" define proper female learning as that which eschews non-essential academic subjects in favor of domestic, maternal knowledge and skills (*LG* 9.196). Compare this

vision of female curriculum with the Gryphon's and Mock Turtle's extensive education, which covers "Reeling and Writhing . . . and then the different branches of Arithmetic," as well as "Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seography: then Drawling . . . Stretching, and Fainting in Coils" (*W* 9.76-77). Additionally, the Mock Turtle and Gryphon have access to exclusively male knowledge, the tuition of the "Classical master" (*W* 9.77), while the closest Alice can get to such subjects is peeking into "her brother's Latin Grammar" (*W* 2.18). These male creatures' curriculum, in contrast to the education implied by the Queens' exam, reads as much more academic. The contrast speaks to the books' desire for a female education that accommodates a girl's gendered body and mind as well as prioritizes her future roles and duties.

Her peeking into her brother's Latin Grammar and her ability to recall just as much of it as she does of her own French lessons epitomize Alice's educational ambition. The books' presentation of female incapacity for intellectual learning casts this ambition as potentially endangering Alice's future femininity. Not only can such ambition divert her interest in or ability to perform her adult, womanly roles and duties (the Mock Turtle's "Distraction" and "Derision"), but it also has the potential to tax a mind and derange a body not meant for sustained mental application (the Mock Turtle's "Uglification"). Given the magnitude of learning's threat to the female body and mind, the *Alice* books' undermining of Alice's educational ambition becomes an attempt to preserve her for a proper mental and physical development into feminine womanhood.

*Wonderland*'s and *Through the Looking-Glass*'s efforts to discourage female educational ambition (and so to encourage an appropriately feminine education) by

mocking Alice and undermining her sense of her own learning culminate in the closing narrative frames. In addition to their structural function of containing Alice's dream-adventures and concluding the narrative, the frames reinstate Alice in a reality defined by domesticity. As Geer and Gilead claim, the closing frames repudiate or negate the dreams, and I argue that this power of repudiation or negation operates as much to neutralize Alice's ambition for learning as it does the uprising of playing cards or tableware. Alice's return to reality marks a return to play-acting motherhood with the black and white kittens and to a world in which a girl has many years before she advances to the type of learning that could lead to ambition, distraction, and, ultimately, unsexing. By reinstating Alice in a reality that foregrounds her eventual assumption of feminine womanhood, the closing frames of both books effectively defuse the dangerous potential of her educational ambition by narrating a turn from intellectual ambition to an alignment with ideal femininity.

My readings of the closing narrative frames position Alice as a model of girlhood for her readers. The *Alice* books have historically resisted attempts to read them as purposefully didactic, a resistance inaugurated by Carroll, who rejected the title *Alice's Adventures Underground* because it seemed "too like a lesson book in which instruction about mines would be administered" (*Letters* 1:65) and sustained by critical readings which emphasize the books' mockery of contemporary pedagogy or Alice's "unregenerate" final state (Auerbach 148).[148] However, *Wonderland*'s and *Through the*

[148] See, for example Reinstein, who credits the *Alice* books with the death of didacticism in children's fiction: "[B]oys' adventure novels, like girls' domestic tales, had to educate while they entertained, until after the 1860s and Lewis Carroll," basing her conclusion primarily on the *Alice* books' parodies of moral

*Looking-Glass*'s focused efforts to discredit Alice's educational ambition bespeak precisely such a perception of her ability to serve as model. The anxiety that readers will want to emulate Alice necessitates the deliberate undermining of her learning and her ambition. In order to make certain that Alice, especially the *Wonderland* Alice so fond of "showing off her knowledge," does not become an pattern for similarly precocious, ambitious girls (much like Dinah Mulock's fear for Maggie Tulliver in her review of *The Mill on the Floss*), the *Alice* books present precocious, ambitious Alice as laughably absurd (*W* 1.8).

The *Alice* books' drive to discredit Alice's educational ambition epitomizes the centrality of fears of the physical and mental derangement of developing femininity to their already skeptical vision of education. In their constant need to control Alice, to keep her within the bounds of an ideal of feminine womanhood, whether by undercutting her knowledge, by depicting the female body and mind as incapable of learning, or by insisting on the reality of the narrative frames, *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* present the girl as always shadowed by the specter of the unsexed, learned woman whom she might become.

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tales and verse (123). Similarly, Reichertz believes that "Carroll attacks the utility of informational books . . . with the same logic of parody, conversion to opposites, that he uses on moral books," and that Carroll thus effectively negates "two of the ways people locate themselves honored in the 'real world,'" as if he mistrusted all education (50).

# Afterword: Looking Back, Looking Forward

"The Victorians invented education as we understand it today," declares the opening sentence of Dinah Birch's 2008 *Our Victorian Education* (1). Concerned particularly with how modern, standardized schooling in Britain inhibits "more diverse and personal ways of learning," Birch traces twenty-first-century educational practices, policies, and debates to their nineteenth-century roots (145). Relying on literary and cultural representations of education to support her arguments, Birch finds, "The essential lines of opposition in matters of education are sharply articulated by the novelists, poets, historians and critics of the period" (4). She portrays educational matters--what she calls a pervasive "culture of pedagogy"-- as inflecting the consciousness of Victorian writers, leading to "the feeling . . . that some measure of didactic purpose was a necessary part of an author's calling" (5). As a result, *Our Victorian Education* often seems as much a meditation on fiction's pedagogical capabilities as it is an exploration of how "Victorian ideas can give us a clearer understanding of the origins of our present problems" and can offer "ways in which we can begin to extricate ourselves from our difficulties" (144). Though it develops the former claim more fully than it does the latter, *Our Victorian Education*'s presentation of ideological conflict as productive ground for modern practice valuably recuperates the disputatious nature of educational discourses in the Victorian period.

In my view, the most productive nexus of the ideological conflicts *Our Victorian Education* recuperates is female education.[149] Its position outside traditional, male schooling makes female education the ideal ground for Birch's resistance to the "dominance of a systematized approach to education" that she identifies as beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing today (145). Whether discussing Dickens's and Ruskin's views of femininity, women writers such as Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Sewell, or girls' schools like North London Collegiate, *Our Victorian Education* reads female education as essentially opposed to the increasingly standardized, rationalized education codified by governmental reform.[150] Indeed, Birch's reading of female education comes to celebrate women's exclusion from traditions of education and reform, insisting that "the marginalization which handicapped women in the middle decades of the nineteenth century also gave them the freedom to experiment" with education's practices and ends (89). *Our Victorian Education* seems almost to advocate the perception of female education it ascribes to Dickens: "[F]or him, as for many of his contemporaries, it was girls, associated as they were with the values of emotion and nurture, who could most fully represent the work of a complete education" (34).

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[149] At least one reviewer agrees. MacKnight, reading for *Victorian Review*, notes, "the most engaging part of this book, for me anyway, was the chapter focusing on women" (166-67). Birch devotes of one of four chapters and her most through engagements with literature, to women's education, suggesting her similar sense of the topic's interest or fecundity.

[150] For example, Birch praises the "separatism" of smaller girls' secondary schools as resisting the "masculine Arnoldian model" which she sees as the paradigm of governmental and major reform (87). The schools' "values and ideologies were often insistently female," she asserts, "and deliberately defiant of the uniformity that gained ground throughout the period" (81). Similarly, Birch attributes the demise of these "separatist" schools to the inclusion of girls' schools in the Taunton Commission's purview, lamenting that "the vulnerable feminine tradition that had grown up in the 1850s and 1860s was lost, and often forgotten" (88).

Regardless of its frequently conservative savor,[151] *Our Victorian Education* emphasizes the influence of ideas of female education--and ideals of femininity--on education for both sexes. Such an understanding of the significance of the connections between womanhood and learning is at the heart of "Reading Female Learning."

The close readings of female learning that make up this project are profoundly invested in the types of "vigorous arguments" that Birch identifies as the hallmark and the value of Victorian engagement with education (4). Each of my chapters represents an independent attempt to intervene in and make sense of these arguments on the part of both the novels examined and my examinations. Together, the chapters register, in diverse yet related ways, an understanding that informs Victorian--and indeed, modern, if not current--conceptions of education for girls and women: an understanding of femininity as incompatible with what I have termed intellectuality. This intellectuality has varied manifestations across the novels I consider, from Alice's conviction that she can't be Mabel because "I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little!" (Carroll *Wonderland* 2.15), to Lucy Snowe's determination to be her own (school)mistress, Louisa Gradgrind's subjection to "Facts . . . nothing but Facts" (Dickens *Hard* 1.1.9), and Ethel May's Latin verses. However, each educated woman displays an ambition for learning that places her at odds with her own, her society's, or her novel's definition of feminine womanhood. How--and whether--she resolves that

[151] See, for example, her claim that "the growing success of girls within the examination structure" is due, at least in part, to the fact that "success in our examinations is not primarily a matter of independent thought and response, but of continuously maintained application, and a willingness to absorb information and accept authority" (127).

antagonism depends upon herself, her society, and her novel, but the narrative interest of such resolutions indicates that they were a topic of much moment not only to the men and women writing female learning but also to the men and women reading it.

In her progress, the learning female character serves as a model. If she is not an example to be explicitly followed or avoided, then she serves as a body onto which the novel projects particular conclusions or concerns. In this sense, the learning girls and women whom I read in this project are themselves teachers or, at least, object lessons. They may instruct the reader in the proper, feminine end of learning as Yonge's heroines do, or they may depict educational ambition as hazardous as Alice's dream-adventures do, but all are portrayed as capable learners. This shared capability suggests that at mid-century the concern over female education had less to do with ability (for at least rudimentary learning) than with suitability. Indeed, a concern with suitability pervaded Victorian educational thinking, as is evident in the period's governmental efforts to prescribe the appropriate course of education for each socio-economic group. With regard to female education, suitability centers on concepts of gender, so that a girl's experience of education necessarily involves an experience of gender difference. In fact, in their shared possession of a brother or brothers, these female characters also model the gender difference inherent in learning for girls and women. Though brothers often serve as points of access to higher (read, masculine) knowledge in these novels, their capacity to police the gendered boundaries of learning invokes the girl's exclusion. The acute ways in which Victorian women such as Emily Davies felt this exclusion or employed it to justify their own educational projects, as did Frances Buss at North London Collegiate

School, illustrate that the educated female character's role as model is not merely abstract: she speaks to beliefs and negotiations important to individuals' lives and practices. The learned or learning female character thus reinforces the novel's pedagogical potential.

My claim for the pedagogical power of the novel, especially in the Victorian period, is not a new one. Indeed, Birch builds much of her argument for the need for a less rigidly standardized system of schooling on the model of literature's relationship between author and reader. In her formulation, literature, specifically the novel, represents a "kind of teaching that . . . cannot be regulated, or examined" because "[n]o novelist, no matter how fastidious, can dictate the responses of the reader" (7). Birch's vision of reading as a model for schooling in its encouragement of personal, imaginative engagement prioritizes the type of didactic identification I see at work in the novels of Yonge, Dickens, Brontë, Eliot, and Carroll. Furthermore, Birch's claim suggests the didactic potential of critical reading as a lens through which to focus otherwise "unpredictable" and thus possibly unprofitable engagements with a text and its ideas. It is with this view of the pedagogical power of critical reading, particularly the critical readings that make up "Reading Female Learning," that I conclude.

Just as *Our Victorian Education* poses fuller comprehension of Victorian discourses on education as a crucial step toward resolving modern difficulties, I offer the learning female character as a constructive site for further consideration of femininity and its relation to education. Female learning, whether undertaken by a teacher, a university woman, a schoolgirl, or even an enthusiastic home reader, is always something of an

anomaly for the Victorians, positioning it as a fruitful site of investigation into how representations of female education can uphold--as well as challenge or complicate--the concepts of femininity that circulate in Victorian society. In addition their capacity to indicate fresh nodes for the study of Victorian gender, family structure, or political and social reform, the learning female characters of the mid-Victorian novel serve as an accessible nexus for rarely straightforward concerns about the body's relation to the mind and the individual's relation to society and the race. These binaries of mind/body and individual/group have historically been deployed in the service of patriarchal privilege to cast woman in the subordinate position because she is ruled by her body and its reproductive imperative. Critical engagement with female learning therefore serves as a site for interrogation of and resistance to institutional and cultural structures of authority. In this way, the readings that constitute this project heed Nancy Armstrong's call in her epilogue to *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) for continued critical examinations of literature for, by, and about women, a call that deeply resonates with my scholarly and pedagogical commitments.

In conclusion, I want to present the learning female characters studied by this project as models one final time. Through their ability to speak to and for shifting definitions of femininity and education, these characters draw attention to the ways in which literature interacts with and records cultural-historical conditions. In essence, they model--they embody--the pedagogical power of literature, whether or not they are explicitly positioned as examples. I believe that because these female characters' ambitions, struggles, and experiences remain at heart recognizable to the modern reader,

their stories can be spring-boards not just for literary or historical study, but for deeper investigation of and reflection on the ways in which cultural, institutional, and historical structures enable and obstruct meaningful learning.

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